

Q&A: MSM Lies, Consciousness, Evolution, Australia, Assange, And Me

Caitlin Johnstone

Another important dispatch from The Greenville Post. Be sure to share it widely.

It's time for another Q&A article! I think I'm going to make these a regular feature that I put out every so often, so if you have any questions for me email me at admin@caitlinjohnstone.com and I'll get to them the next time I write another of these. Let's jump right in.

"I'd love to have more examples of how the corporate media has lied to us. Iraqi WMD is the best example, then there's Iraqi soldiers pulling Kuwaiti babies from incubators, and of course Russiagate. What else can we point toward to explain to people what's happening?"

There are tons of examples, but their [lies about Syria](#) have been especially appalling. Whenever anyone disputes my claim that the mass media is waging a giant deception campaign I like to share [this fake, scripted CNN interview](#) in which a seven year-old Syrian girl sounds out scripted words explaining her analysis of an alleged chemical attack. I've never encountered anyone who could provide an intelligible argument for this; when I share it in a debate it always makes the other party's head spin. The girl is indisputable reciting from a script, and what's far more disturbing is that that means CNN's Alisyn Camerota *necessarily had the other half of that script*. They intentionally staged an interview designed to incriminate a government [long targeted for regime change](#)

using propaganda spouting from the sweet, innocent face of a child, and they falsely presented it as a real interview.

Lately I've been focused on the outright lies the mass media [have been circulating](#) about Julian Assange, including the *Guardian's* [now-fully disproven](#) and always [self-evidently false report](#) that Paul Manafort met repeatedly with Assange during the election campaign. Some other examples include the [bullshit they've been peddling on Venezuela](#), the *Washington Post* publishing [sixteen smear pieces in sixteen hours](#) against Bernie Sanders at the hottest point in the Democratic primary, the [demented, hysterical smears](#) against Jeremy Corbyn in the UK, MSNBC doing [455 Stormy Daniels segments last year but zero on Yemen](#), the [media blackout](#) on the Yellow Vests protests in France, their unquestioning repetition of all US war propaganda narratives including the [Gulf of Tonkin](#) incident and the "[taking viagra for rape](#)" narrative in Libya, and their aggressive refusal to so much as question any of the [jaw-dropping plot holes](#) in the official 9/11 narrative if you feel like making things interesting.

Any of these would have been instantly corrected if the mass media were interested in doing actual journalism and helping to create an informed citizenry, but they're not. They're interested in pro-establishment narrative management and ratings. In that order.

But if you really think about it, the best evidence that the mass media is lying to us not just in those more extreme examples but constantly, every day, is that if we were living in a free society where people were electing leaders and lawmakers based on truth and facts, our world wouldn't look this crazy. If the primary means that most people use to inform themselves about their society, their nation and their world were accurate, they wouldn't keep signing off on a system that is controlled by the very rich which perpetuates a state of ecocide, endless war, and growing economic injustice. They continue to consent to this system because every day,

those who control the dominant narratives of our time reassure them that this system is working fine.

"I focus on America because it's the head of the beast. It's the source and summit of most of the empire's malignancy, and because it's where most of the military firepower and money is concentrated, its uniquely important role in imperial dynamics mean its citizenry are the most aggressively propagandized people in the world..."

We see this reassurance manifest in all sorts of ways that stand out a lot less than their more overt offenses, like the way they continually lend legitimacy to an electoral system that always gives rise to a choice between two candidates who are both interested in maintaining the oligarchic status quo and acting like that's perfectly normal. We see it in the way we're assured day after day that capitalism is totally working out fine for everyone, not just in the news media but in sitcoms, pop songs and Hollywood movies. We see it in the way western military violence rips apart human bodies all over the earth every single day, but it's barely ever treated as newsworthy, and when it is reported it's treated like it's a good thing. We see it in the fact that the system is broken and the world is on fire, yet we're told that the most important news on any given day is what some stupid celebrity is doing with their genitals.

These little omissions, half-truths and normalizations end up being far more destructive than the more overt media manipulations that people like to cite, because they happen constantly, so common that it's hard to even perceive them. But because the media class is [owned by the same plutocratic class](#) which owns the political class, it's possible to keep this systematic disinformation programming in place, simply by

deciding what sorts of personalities get hired for the job.

“Which Democratic candidate is the most ridiculous?”

Beto. Why are people still pretending that that arm-flailing, desk-standing platitude fountain is a thing? Biden is the worst candidate, but Beto is by far the most ridiculous. Not just because he’s a cartoonish self-parody of a mindless political automaton, but because there are people who buy into it.

“You seem to be tireless and extremely committed to your craft. Do you have time to enjoy and take in life with friends and family? What does an average day look like for Caitlin?”

I always get fans telling me they’re concerned that I don’t take more time off, but I mean, think about it: I write about the things that stir me most deeply for a living, and I work with my best friend and soulmate doing it. I’m not exactly breaking my back here. What would I do with more days off? I’d probably just spend my time talking with Tim about what to write about when we get back to work. I really deeply enjoy what I do. But yes, I also take plenty of time with my kids and extended family and I do make time for liesure and recreation.

“I really enjoy reading your articles and wonder how you are able to consistently produce such great pieces. I have dabbled with writing and blogging, but with a full-time job, an 8-year-old daughter, and a long, soul-draining commute, I find that it is very difficult to just sit down and write something... How do you continue to be so productive and creative? “

I received a bunch of questions like this for this Q&A.

Being able to do this job full-time is a huge luxury that [I’m extremely grateful for](#). If I didn’t have a bunch of people who were willing to support me in dedicating my time and mental

energy to this singular task, I wouldn't be able to do what I do. If you don't have that luxury, you shouldn't put pressure on yourself to have the kind of output as someone who does. But that doesn't mean you can't keep up a creative output; [here are some tips](#) I wrote for *Elephant Journal* a few years ago for mothers who are struggling to make art in the midst of a busy schedule. I wrote that back when I was still rediscovering my creativity and struggling to find time to make art; it formed the foundation of what my thing is today.

With regard to staying productive and creative, I'm really dedicated to inner work, so I don't often get bogged down by the inertia of heavy emotions or the cognitive cul de sacs of patterned thinking. I [tell people](#) that revolution is largely an inside job because that's been my experience: if you want to be able to help the world and have lots of energy to do so, you've got to find ways of healing your own inner bullshit. I list a few practices that have worked for me [here](#).

Also, like I mentioned above and [as I often remind my readers](#), people should remember that there are two of me. Folks who want to do what I do tell me they struggle to be anywhere near as prolific as I am, but I've got an extremely intense symbiotic relationship with my husband that's a lot greater than the sum of our parts, and that's where my output comes from. I don't have to spend as much time on research or coming up with fresh perspectives, because he's always working with me and helping me, and we're constantly giving each other new ideas that translate easily into articles. I'm not a superwoman, I'm [a fusion](#).

“Do you have more than just Tim helping out, and if not, why not? I'm sure a lot of us would be glad to help you in any way we can. I think accumulation of data would be a powerful way your community could help out.”

Tim's my only help on the articles except where noted, but the

[Debunking All Assange Smears](#) article was a very successful implementation of crowd-sourced information to address a very broad topic, and I should probably employ that strategy and similar strategies more often. I did it once before with [The Big Fat Compendium of Russiagate Debunkery](#) two years ago, but then Aaron Maté started writing and kind of made the whole thing obsolete, so I forgot about it.

In any case though, the fact that I'm entirely crowd-funded means I've always got hundreds of people helping me every single day. Could not do this without them.

“Caitlin, In the hardest, most realistic terms you can imagine, how can we, the enlightened few, even begin to wake and shake the people into positive action? We need to be united en masse against the bastards, yet in real terms there's nothing at all happening.”

Nothing's happening because most people don't want it to. They don't want it to because they're being propagandized day in and day out into believing that the status quo is normal and acceptable. As long as those propaganda narratives remain imbued with the power of belief, the propagandized will remain complacent. That complacency will end only when the propaganda narratives are disrupted. They can only be disrupted by a falling away of the belief in them.

The hardest, most realistic shot the enlightened few have at causing belief in propaganda narratives to fall away is to further weaken people's [already waning trust](#) in the narrative control firms which promote them. This means using our unprecedented capacity to network and share information, our ability to be artistic, funny and right on the crest of the zeitgeist (which the propagandists universally lack), and our ability to remain decentralized to circulate information which counters the disinformation, thereby opening one set of eyelids at a time to the fact that we're being lied to.

We can accomplish this more effectively when it's accompanied by activism which the guardians of the status quo aggressively reject: defending Assange, BDS, antiwar, pushing for anti-establishment candidates, etc. The activism itself won't necessarily accomplish its goals, but if it's done well it can force the manipulators to push back hard and overextend themselves, so that we can highlight what they're doing and show everyone the demonic face behind the friendly mask of liberal democracy. If we just sit back without engaging in activism they never have to play defense, and it's much easier for them to disguise the true nature of their manipulations.

Another way we can awaken the world, which I insist is realistic but few are ever interested, is to awaken ourselves. We're all interconnected in so very many more ways than most of us realize, and your own inner work is the one part of the world that you have the most control over. No matter how enlightened we consider ourselves, there's always more work to be done on that front; there are always aspects of ourselves that could be made more conscious and healthy. Remaining fully engaged in the outward fight while continually finding ways to bring more truthfulness to your own inner workings is the best interface you've got for the awakening of the world, because when you're active in the world your own degree of awakening can't help but seed awakening in it. The internet makes us more interconnected than ever, so it's possible to shine your own awakened consciousness into far more corners of humanity than ever before.

“People who tune out politics think everything we say is bat shit crazy. How do you double around and get them to question the mainstream narrative? And what's the best place to start?”

Well you remember what got you questioning it, right? We've all had one big thing that got us going “Holy shit, maybe this is all a lie!” For some it was 9/11, for others it was the Iraq invasion, for others it was Syria, for others it was the DNC manipulations in 2016. It always starts with one loose

thread in the [narrative matrix](#), which we start tugging at and eventually unravel the whole big picture.

You don't need to show people the entire web of lies, you only need to show them one loose thread, and if you can spark their curiosity enough they'll take over from there. The 2020 election will present many opportunities, as will the cognitive dissonance of Democrats supporting Trump's most depraved agendas. Just watch for opportunities, for plot holes in the official narrative, for glitches in the matrix, and when you spot one make a ton of noise about it and draw as much attention to it as you can. Any little part of it which gets people going "What the hell is that?" can open the whole thing up for them. That's why I like that CNN Bana Alabed video I posted earlier; it's just such a glaring glitch in the matrix and tends to stop people in their tracks, even if the big picture I'm describing sounds bat shit crazy to them in that moment.

But it's like the [Parable of the Sower](#); we're just tossing seeds everywhere in the hope that some of them will take root and sprout. Sometimes you'll land on fertile soil, sometimes you'll land on someone who'll put their fingers in their ears. The openings only exist where they exist, and there's no point bashing your head against a closed door or fretting if one seed lands on the rocks.

"How aware are Australians of the plight of Julian Assange, and what percentage care?"

I don't have any facts or figures, but [this recent WSWS article](#) titled "Growing popular support for Julian Assange in Australia" is encouraging. My own interactions with my countrymen have convinced me that, unsurprisingly, the only thing preventing them from decrying the empire's abuse of one of our sons is the near-absence of critical reporting on the subject from our news media. If you guys think American MSM is bad you should check out Australia's; it's like CNN's cold

table scraps.

The other day I cornered candidate Jeremy Hearn who was out on the hustings passing out flyers for the election we're having next month and asked him for his position on Assange. He seemed genuinely surprised to be asked the question and had to pause and think for a second, but then he replied that Assange is one of our own and we should help him get out of there. I think that's how the majority of mainstream Australians are; it's a subject that's kept from their attention, but when they think about it it's obvious that helping him is the right thing to do.

If Australians simply pushed for a government that would bring Assange home and protect him from the tentacles of the United States, I think that one movement alone would help push us towards health and sovereignty more than anything else we could do. But few of us realize that that's the path we need right now, and it's why we're such docile and unquestioning servants of empire.

"Do you ever write about Australia? You seem pretty much obsessed with the United States."

I focus on America because it's the head of the beast. It's the source and summit of most of the empire's malignancy, and because it's where most of the military firepower and money is concentrated, its uniquely important role in imperial dynamics mean its citizenry are the most aggressively propagandized people in the world. This means that if I want to address the problems in our world I'll have the most opportunities to land a blow that really matters by focusing on the US. I could write about Australia, but hardly anyone would care, it wouldn't get any shares, and even if it did it wouldn't matter because Australia just follows America's lead. When I do write about Australia I do so mainly as pertains to our abusive relationship with the United States.

“In your [previous Q&A](#) you radiate an idealism that we will one day awaken to truth and when that happens the power of evil will be neutralized. Do you see evil as a constant in human nature, problematic for eternity, perhaps even a cosmological given, like yin and yang? Or can it be cleansed from our universe?”

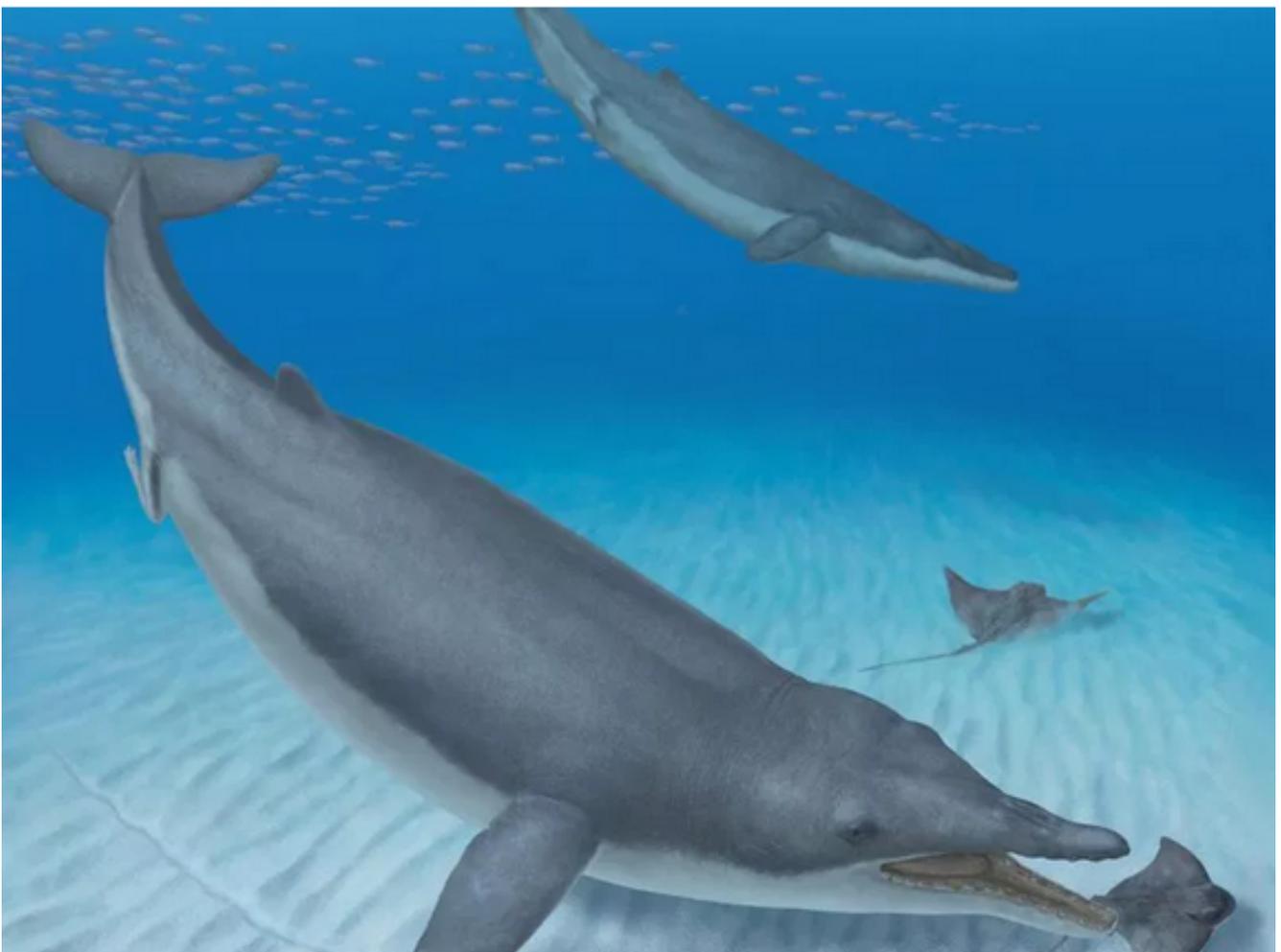
No I don't see it as a constant or a given at all. My own experiences with the human condition have assured me that it's possible for us to overcome our unwholesome conditioning patterns and begin moving harmoniously with life, and I believe that's actually our natural state of being.

I think we're just in an awkward transition phase as a species. We evolved these massive brains extremely fast, we've only just gotten to a stage where we're not all fighting for survival all the time, and now we're just beginning to address the question of how we can use our capacity for abstract thought in a world where we're not constantly running from saber-toothed tigers and trying not to starve to death. We're in that clumsy stage between (A) using our brains to figure out how to survive long enough to reproduce in an environment full of sharp teeth and nonstop violence, to (B) using our brains to figure out how to collaborate with each other and with our environment for the wellbeing of all.

Just this year they [found a fossilized skeleton in Peru](#) that's 42.6 million years old and an evolutionary ancestor of the modern whale. Whales are descended from land mammals, so the discovery of a “missing link” amphibious ancestor with hooved feet was a big deal. But check out how awkward this fucker looked compared to the whales of today:



In 2017 they [discovered another more recent fossil](#) of a whale ancestor, also in Peru, from 36 million years ago. You can see that they're getting the hang of it, but they still looked ridiculous with tiny little legs dangling off the backs of their bodies like a reverse tyrannosaurus:



Imagine how awkward it must have been to be a creature in an evolutionary transition phase, before developing the sophisticated blowhole breathing, sonar and baleen feeding systems we see in the majestic sea creatures of today, having to chase after fish using the clumsy equipment that still largely resembles the tools your ancestors had adapted for land hunting, all while holding your breath and trying not to drown.

That's kind of how I see us right now. The transition is happening much more rapidly just like everything else is, but in essence we've entered the sea and we're struggling to evolve a blowhole and shed our cumbersome rear legs, and it's just awkward for everyone.

With regard to "evil", I use that word a lot because it generally gets the job done for the purposes of communicating basic ideas about the toxicity of the status quo, but really all I mean by it is that it's a deviation from the path toward the creation of the type of world that healthy people want to see. Mass military slaughter, exploitation and oppression, are all deviant from the kind of harmonious world we're trying to create. They're not per se "evil" in the way that term is generally understood in Judeo-Christian religions; they're just movements back into an undesirable direction. They're movements back onto land when we're trying to master baleen feeding and sonar hunting.

"Do you think that a collective consciousness raising of humanity is best pursued through a political realm?"

Absolutely, at least in part. Collective consciousness can't be raised if we're keeping unconscious the fact that so many of our fellow humans are suffering, starving, struggling, being oppressed, and being murdered in wars. To interface with this reality in the real world is to be engaged in politics to

some extent, and any attempt to end suffering in our world on a large scale is necessarily political in some way. If you want to engage in elevating collective consciousness, there's got to be a political aspect to that engagement.

That said, some of the politically active people I run into in this gig are some of the most deeply unconscious individuals I've ever encountered. Many people use political activism as a way to act out their inner pain, treating those who stand against them ideologically as an emotional stand-in for their parents and whoever else they harbor deep-seated unresolved aggression towards, and just generally wanking their inner demons on everyone in a completely unhelpful way. So, again, inner work is necessary. Don't bother trying to elevate collective consciousness if you're not elevating your own first and foremost.

"Do you meditate?"

That hasn't been my path, but I highly recommend it. It's obviously a great tool for bringing consciousness to inner processes.

"Do you train martial arts?"

No but Tim did for years; when you see a reference to combat sports techniques in my writing it's usually an idea that came from him. I'm a big UFC fan though.

"Would you say that the Unity4J movement is representative of the article that you wrote a couple of years back that famously got slammed by those on the 'left' end of the political spectrum?"

Yes, and [I have said so](#). My only goal with that article was to get people out of their echo chambers where they're kept isolated and impotent so as to open up new possibilities. Unity4 has been the largest, most sustained and most successful effort in advancing public support for Julian

Assange because it doesn't neuter itself with sectarianism or isolate itself in a dopey ideological echo chamber.

An annoying number of leftists think it's more important to only have anything to do with the eleven people in the world who agree with you perfectly than it is to actually shove your healthy ideas into mainstream consciousness by whatever means are necessary; the world may die as a result, but at least you get to feel pure and good about yourself while it does. The reason you see Assange smeared as a right-winger today is because he used to be a darling of the left, so it kills his old fan base. Divide-and-conquer works. It's unhealthy to play into it.

“Is reality real, or is it just a whole lot of little electrical circuits in my brain?”

There's no way to know anything about objective, absolute reality apart from the fact that appearances are appearing to a subject, i.e. you. This could all easily be some kind of hallucination, virtual reality simulation, or some other kind of illusory phenomenon whose nature we can't even imagine. The only thing you can be sure of is that you (meaning the subject experiencing whatever this all is) exist. You don't get to have any certainty at all that you're a body/brain organism with a particular name and a particular history, or that you're anything else in particular, but you can be certain of your own existence, in and of itself.

This certainty of your own beingness is the only sane place to take your stand when trying to come to a healthy relationship with “reality” (whatever that may be), because it's the only certainty you'll ever get to have about anything. You are the unknowable, ineffable subject to which all thoughts, memories, feelings and sense impressions apparently arise; everything else is a beautiful mystery. Developing a lasting and crystal clear awareness of this fact cuts away a lot of the mental bullshit we otherwise get sucked into on a day to day basis

when we believe all the babbling stories that are told by the thoughts in our heads.

And that's it for now! Thanks for your questions everyone; we'll do another of these soon.

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Caitlin Johnstone is a brave journalist, political junkie, relentless feminist, champion of the 99 percent. And a powerful counter-propaganda tactician.



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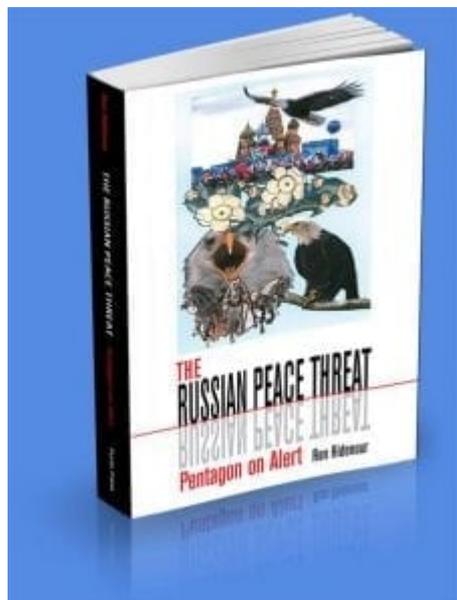
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