

Let's talk about another example.

Michael Hastings died in a car crash is a **SMALLER TRUTH**. Michael Hastings was murdered via his car being hacked and blown up on the California streets by the CIA because he was investigating a story that was even bigger than his takedown of General McChrystal is a **HORRIBLE TRUTH**. **THE MINIMUM VIABLE TRUTH** is that Michael Hastings was afraid someone was going to tamper with his car, and we now know that remote hacking of cars of that type is possible and was possible at the time of his death. And I am a True Believer, not in the bomb part of the story but that the reporter was launched at a hundred miles an hour into a tree not by tragic accident but because he was a shit stirrer of the highest caliber, and I have seen The Strings enough to know that hacking a car is well within the abilities of his enemies, and murder is not outside of their comfort zone. But I tell people **THE MINIMUM VIABLE TRUTH**. I tell them it's a possibility. I tell them what could be, based not on my gut or what another True Believer said but dispassionate analysis. And maybe I am a traitor to my tribe for not hollering **THE HORRIBLE TRUTH** from the mountain tops, but when I infect others with this truth it sticks.

IT ALL COMES DOWN TO  
WHAT YOUR GOALS ARE:

DO YOU WANT TO CHANGE THE WORLD?

OR

DO YOU WANT TO BE RIGHT?

NOTHING IS CERTAIN

# THE DOCTRINE OF THE MINIMUM VIABLE TRUTH

**THE HORRIBLE TRUTH** finds us all eventually, the kinds of people who **QUESTION EVERYTHING** and **LOOK FOR THE STRINGS**. Sometimes you only catch a corner of it, a little sliver of the **ENLIGHTENMENT MISERABLE** that needles your brain and won't let things rest. Sometimes you witness yourself **THAT WHICH CANNOT BE UNSEEN**. People die, governments fall, hopes are crushed, buildings burn. There are reasons for all these things, and they are not always the **OFFICIAL VERSIONS™** of the story. It's a fact that every once in a while a conspiracy comes along and gets shit done, and the people who know **THE HORRIBLE TRUTH** are inevitably painted with the same brush as the people who think they can hear the stars talking in their fillings. They holler and go mad with frustration, trying to bring the masses to the whole of **THE HORRIBLE TRUTH**.

**THE DOCTRINE OF THE MINIMUM VIABLE TRUTH** states that it is better to focus on the smallest, least controversial aspects of a **HORRIBLE TRUTH** than to focus on the **BIG TRUTHS** behind it. That it's better to bring people to a middle ground even if that middle ground contains significant untruths or omissions than to attempt to drag people kicking and screaming to full enlightenment.

Let's use my favorite example: the 9/11 Truthers. This group believes it has found a great and profound **HORRIBLE TRUTH**: that the US government orchestrated the September 11th attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center buildings, killing thousands in a pre-meditated false flag operation to justify the passage of some truly horrendous legislation and the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, which has itself led to hundreds of thousands of deaths.

Memetically, this HORRIBLE TRUTH has a lot going for it. It has hooks in “the government is evil,” “look how smart I am to have figured this thing out,” “everything happens for a reason,” “somebody is running the show,” “things are not as they seem,” “powerful men are capable of great evil,” and even “the call is coming from inside the house.” When someone is infected by this HORRIBLE TRUTH, they follow the research of other True Believers and become experts in the well-developed ARG of Trutherism. Like Jehovah's Witnesses, they have an answer for every potential criticism or argument, armed to the teeth with annotated photographs and expert analysis. And, like Jehovah's Witnesses, they make very few converts.

The low conversion rate infuriates Truthers to no end. After all, we're not talking about a small event: three buildings were destroyed and the entire western world witnessed a terrifying display of human tragedy and loss on live television. If that was staged, wouldn't you want to know? Wouldn't the world deserve to know? We've grown up on stories of THE HORRIBLE TRUTH being revealed at the last second, exonerating our heroes and sending the villains to prison. But the real world has never, never worked that way.

Truthers divided discussion about the real tragedy of 9/11, wasting untold mental and physical energy on screaming at the government for doing something which it may or may not have done, and on screaming at the public for not getting on board. The public, annoyed by the Cult of Trutherism, deepened its acceptance of the OFFICIAL VERSIONS™ and refused to engage in any discussion about government malfeasance in regard to 9/11 and its aftermath.

The whole HORRIBLE TRUTH whether it is true or not, is not worth screaming about. As soon as you mention 9/11 Truth in any context, you immediately turn away anyone who is not already a True Believer, and they will not hear anything else you have to say on this or any other subject.

THE MINIMUM VIABLE TRUTH, in the case of 9/11 Truth, is that factions of the conservative movement were planning to take advantage of a national catastrophe to promote their own disastrous agenda, including the erosion of privacy rights and the invasion of several sovereign nations. In comparison to THE HORRIBLE TRUTH, this may sound small and irrelevant. After all, how can you be shocked and angry about people taking advantage of something tragic when you have already accepted into your heart that those same people willfully engineered their own tragedy? But without the prior context of the conspiracy story, this Truth is terrifying and awful in its own right. Like an abusive partner, people entrusted with tremendous power abused the traumatization of an entire country to further their own agenda and harm the people already hurting.

THE MINIMUM VIABLE TRUTH is compatible with most belief systems, it doesn't engender the same kneejerk FUCK OFF TRUTHER that THE HORRIBLE TRUTH does. The evidence supporting THE MINIMUM VIABLE TRUTH isn't cloistered away on the sketchier parts of the internet, it lives in the headlines, it's in the public domain documents. To believe THE HORRIBLE TRUTH, one must accept a series of assertions about the chemical properties of jet fuel and conspiracies of construction workers and cleaners who never mentioned the thermite being installed and the human ability to consciously murder thousands of their own people to forward their own goals. To believe THE MINIMUM VIABLE TRUTH you only have to believe that people are willing to take advantage of a bad situation.

There are smaller truths too, but THE MINIMUM VIABLE TRUTH is the one that turns hearts and minds against the assholes pulling shit, that points them at better questions and helps them make better decisions about who to vote for and what policies to oppose. The heroism of the FDNY is a SMALLER TRUTH, it is evident in every aspect of their performance on that miserable Tuesday and the days and weeks after, but it does nothing to turn the hurt and horror to a productive end. SMALLER TRUTH can derail conversations, but THE MINIMUM VIABLE TRUTH unites.