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Who Do You Believe? The Growing Acceptance of Deception and Deceit in Our Society A View from the Battlefield By Jamala Rogers BC Editorial Board

"You're entitled to your own opinions. You're not entitled to your own facts." These lines are generally attributed to Daniel Patrick Moynihan and frequently get tossed about when one entity wants to shed light on another entity's twisting of the facts. The real meaning gets obscured in the mockery of political discourse. Media sources, led by high profile elected officials, are taking us down a slippery slope where facts are no longer important or the basis for truth.

This election cycle seems to top all previous ones for forked-tongue politics. There are mistruths, half-truths and outright lies flying around, so much so that a number of fact-checking sites have emerged. There are also fact checkers for the fact checkers. These flurries of interpretations are brought to us in slick, non-stop packaging yelling the question: Who do you believe - us or your lying eyes?!

Most citizen observers will say that all politicians lie. By all fact checkers' accounts, the Mitt Romney-Paul Ryan team is way ahead of the pack in the lying game. Political analyst, Matt Taibbi, ripped into the governor by calling him "a salesman and bullshit artist of the highest order" in his recent Rolling Stone Politics blog. No argument here.

In the age where every grunt or action by a public official is captured on videotape, it doesn't seem to be curbing their propensity to stretch the truth or outright lie. Now you can see split screens of them lying

and then telling another lie to explain the other two lies. Your Grandma was correct when she wisely warned, "If you tell one lie, you must tell two."

Strangely, confronting these folks about their history of lying hasn't seemed to change their behavior. In a few cases, the lie catches on as with President Obama's birthplace. Upwards to 25% of the electorate believe that the president is not a U.S. citizen.

But there are many other lies that have negative policy implications, such as weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the number of blacks on welfare, voter fraud being rampant, and the list stretches on. U.S. citizens have been told some serious, costly lies.

Are examples like this a case of low (or no) information voters who'll accept anything that resonates with their core beliefs? Is it a matter of repeating an image or comment enough times until it gets fully internalized? Are we too busy to dig deeper for the truth? Are we more accepting of a lie if we tend to like the person or entity?

Politicians don't have a monopoly on deliberate deception. Product advertisers, faith leaders, mass media and others who have the attention of the public to shape as they please must also be held accountable.

I fully understand that most of us don't have the time to decode and decipher all the noise coming at us on a daily basis. I also don't think we want to be mere empty vessels for anyone to pour their version of the facts into our heads - as in Ditto Heads, making us vulnerable to manipulation for the benefit of others.

We must regain our intuition about truth and character that has been dulled by mindless television and radio. The social justice movement used to be guided by a strong moral compass but at times, we have fallen for the okey-doke. Our movement must raise the bar and set the standard by valuing truth in our own politics and conduct.

I believe we have a responsibility as citizens both to seek the truth and to demand the truth, whether it is our faith leader, an elected official, a news director or a community organizer.

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