

Nick Denton Runs His Own Private Jonestown in the heart of New York City

Goodbye and Good Riddance: Sociopathy of Gawker and Gawker-Like Media Finally Exposed

By [Ryan Holiday](#) •



Nick Denton, founder of Gawker, talks with his legal team before Terry Bollea, aka Hulk Hogan, testifies in court during his trial against Gawker Media at the Pinellas County Courthouse on March 8, 2016. (Photo: John Pendygraft-Pool/Getty Images)

In the next few weeks, in a courtroom very far from Manhattan, a somber judge will call his court to order and render judgment on a group of reporters whose almost unfathomable recklessness and self-absorption [has hurt countless people over the years](#). If there is such thing as fairness and justice in this world, hopefully we'll hear something like the following words come from the bench:

“I do not know how, or under what circumstances the four of you found each other, but your callous indifference and utter disregard for everything that is good and decent has

rocked the very foundation upon which our society is built. I can think of nothing more fitting than for the four of you to spend a year removed from society so that you can contemplate the manner in which you have conducted yourselves.”

Of course, those are actually the words uttered by Judge Vandelay from the classic series finale of *Seinfeld*. But could there be a more appropriate judgment for the selfish and reckless scribblers at Gawker who now await the outcome of [a \\$100 million dollar lawsuit](#)? Could there be a more fitting end for these young Manhattanites than an absurd, unexpected trial that parades their endless misdeeds in front of a diverse and varied collection of victims who have rightfully pined for their downfall?

If you don't follow media too closely, you might not know what I'm talking about. Or you might be unsure why so many people have strong feelings about a collection of websites that cover video games, celebrity gossip and feminism (or why I might have ranted about them [in past columns](#)).

Let me explain. First off, very briefly, [Gawker is being sued by Terry Bollea, better known as Hulk Hogan](#), for publishing a sex tape (along with commentary that ruthlessly mocked him) of him sleeping with the wife of a friend in an open relationship, which was recorded without his knowledge. Gawker has tried to claim that the tape was newsworthy because Hogan is famous and has talked about his sex life in public before.

I do not pretend to be a legal scholar or to know how the court will ultimately rule. But as a media critic and a human being, I can say with confidence that this is an utterly preposterous argument. Would this mean that [the stolen peephole footage of Erin Andrews](#) in her hotel room would have been newsworthy if she'd once had a racy interview on Howard Stern or posed in provocative photographs? Or that stolen footage of Sasha Grey would be fair game because she worked in the sex industry?

Regardless of the outcome of this case, the facts of the trial have revealed without a shadow of a doubt the depravity and avarice that have long driven the Gawker and its sister sites since their creation by Nick Denton in 2003. Over the last few months, and now on videotape in front of stunned jurors and spectators, we're finally able to see it for ourselves. What critics could only begin to try to explain to the public has finally been laid bare: the Gawker Media Empire is rotten with a deep and cancerous sociopathy...and always has been.

You don't have to take my word for it—their own words will do. During [a taped deposition](#) prior to the trial, Gawker's former editor A.J. Daulerio was asked whether it was correct to say that any consideration of the human being on the other end of his story never entered his mind. His reply: “Correct.” Asked, point blank by the lawyer, “Had you known that Hulk Hogan would be emotionally distressed by this publication, you would have still published it, correct?” He replied simply, “Sure, yes” and later, [on the stand](#), claimed that caring about stuff like that was “not his job.” Asked whether he even cared when he posted it if it was actually Hogan in the blurry tape which he had blasted out to the world, Mr. Daulerio admitted that no, he did not.

If you can believe it, that's just the mild stuff.

In another instance, when asked during the trial whether there were any celebrity sex tapes he would not consider newsworthy, Mr. Daulerio replied that he might make an exception “if it were a child.” Under what age? 4. That’s right, Gawker’s former editor claims *he only draws the line at the rape of a four year old*.

He was joking, he later claimed. Except in practice and in real life, Mr. Daulerio (and the Gawker legal team) apparently don’t immediately draw the line *for other possible cases of rape*. Because in another instance, when the video of a purported rape had been posted on the site, Gawker’s editors [responded to pleas from the victim](#) by saying “Blah, blah blah” and Mr. Daulerio refused to delete the post (until the decision was later reversed).

This really happened. An adult editor responsible for a site that draws over 37 million visitors a month considered this appropriate behavior. Asked about it under oath, when he had every incentive and motivation to present himself as positively as possible, he couldn’t even be bothered to defend himself! There are murderers and terrorists who manage to fake basic interpersonal skills under questioning better than that.

Worse, the rest of his colleagues at the site think there is so little wrong with all this that they have been [posting a livestream](#) of the trial on their site.

Then again, look at some of his peers’ infractions against human decency: Gawker has [posted stolen nude photographs of female celebrities](#) (while simultaneously running a feminist site that supposedly cares about women), published utterly untrue gossip and lies (while regularly criticizing politicians and companies who are less than honest), sheltered millions in [offshore tax havens](#) (while criticizing people who do the same), [used stolen property](#) and ill-gotten information from criminals as the basis for their reporting, and of course, regularly exploited and profited off audiences of all types as one of the internet’s foremost [purveyors of outrage porn](#). That doesn’t even get into the fact that earlier this year, the site’s editors [staged a walkout](#) when [a post that outed a gay man with a wife and children](#) was pulled by the site’s editorial council. (The source? The prostitute who was extorting him.) They weren’t protesting that the story ran—no, they were protesting *in support* of the story.

How does something like this happen? How could one site become the source of so much awfulness?

First, I think it’s time we step back and realize that it’s not just Gawker that is on trial here, but *all* of their sensationalistic, pageview driven ilk. Gawker is the worst among many, but only by degree.

As for how this all came to be, here’s an explanation: I once heard about the violent rise and collapse of Napoleon explained as “a French Civil War directed outwards at the rest of Europe.” In many ways, this is also the story of Gawker and the rise of our parasitic media. A collection of individuals with deep dysfunction spewed out at the world with venom and hatred.

We call it “online journalism” but it’s really a collection of children pretending to be adults, thinking the rest of the world lives behind computer screens as they do, forgetting that other people are human beings with feelings, with families and issues. I spoke with an editor of another large media site last

week who speculated that the root of the problem was the “pornographic stereotyping” inherent in the style of writing that Gawker has pioneered (though is no longer unique in propagating).

Not only has that style naturally attracted a certain frustration that many of us feel when we’re young, but it ossified it in the people who trafficked in it everyday. In the way that resentful young men become pick-up artists, others become gossip bloggers. And it really is a twisted game to these people.

A long time ago, a client and a friend were both subjects of some inaccurate speculation in a Gawker story. One of them emailed Mr. Daulerio to deny it and was told by a surprisingly honest Mr. Daulerio that he “could give a fuck” about the actual truth of the story—and that my client and friend were welcome to cover their asses how they liked. And then he dropped a line that now drips with irony considering how things have ended up. “I don’t know, man,” he said, “It’s all professional wrestling.”

----- Forwarded message -----
From: A.J. Daulerio <adaulerio@gmail.com>
Date: Fri, Jun 19, 2009 at 8:58 PM
Subject: Re:
To: Tucker Max <tuckermax@gmail.com>

Maybe it was the recession? Or they stopped caring? I don't know, man
-- it's all professional wrestling.

(Screen shot: Ryan Holiday)

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> >> On Fri, Jun 19, 2009 at 6:19 PM, A.J. Daulerio<adaulerio@gmail.com> wrote:  
> >> > Jesus Christ, didn't I already update this? Thanks for the plug, though,  
> >> > Tucker.  
> >> >  
> >> > Honestly, I could give a fuck who it is, intrepid reporter or not, so  
> >> > cover  
> >> > your ass, their ass as much as you feel is necessary for this.  
> >> >  
> >> > You keep doing whatever is you're doing and I'll do the same.  
> >> >  
> >> > ajd
```

(Screen shot: Ryan Holiday)

Doesn’t that sum it up well? Because this is *not* professional wrestling. These are real people they write about...even when they happen to be professional wrestlers.

Gawker is the clearest modern example of the slow rot of bad principles and bad culture. But they are not alone. Across the media, we have [broken editors training broken writers](#) until those writers become the new editors and the old ones leave to go start new sites. I wrote recently [about the sub-primitization of the media system](#); I don’t think it’s an exaggeration to say that a big part of that toxicity has come from the revolving door of Gawker, with many of its former editors having gone on to form new sites and transform existing ones (and often failing to be able to work with others at those new jobs and later crawling back to Gawker).

Media, like any industry, is a product of its internal culture and incentives. As Bill Walsh [once put it](#), the tendency for individuals is to seek lower ground, like water. Well, in the case of Gawker, that was not only tolerated, it was incentivized—fame and notoriety awaited those willing to stoop to levels where others were reticent to go.

This may feel very abstract to those of you who don't follow media closely, so let me bring it closer to home: Imagine that you are hired to write for a website. You're not required to have any serious expertise in the topics you write about, you're underpaid and living in one of the most expensive cities in the world (yet the dangle of real bonus exists in the form of pageview bonuses), you're surrounded by older, jaded writers, you churn out posts about people and topics that, at best you are disinterested in, and at worst you disdain, while being told that, in Mr. Daulerio's words, "the whole point of publishing is to bring traffic." Is it any surprise that over time, you'd become jaded and harsh yourself? How hard must it become to respect the humanity of others when your own humanity is exploited and suppressed? Wouldn't you *rage* too?

Repeatedly [through the trial](#) and in past interviews, Gawker's founder Nick Denton has explained his deep-seated belief in the freedom of speech, claiming to be driven not by money but by a search for the unvarnished truth. Perhaps he really believes that, but for the cynic in me it calls to mind Goethe's dictum that "none clamor for freedom of the press except those who want to misuse it." To be fair, Gawker has found a not insignificant amount of truth in its years of journalistic searching. The problem, fittingly enough, is that they have been the one to strip the varnish of civility and decency from those truths, precisely because that is where the money is.

Surely the last year has revealed to Mr. Denton that truth and freedom mean almost nothing inside the company he has created, and that "journalism" was the last of his writers' considerations. How could it not be? The only thing they think of is themselves, clearly the only thing that motivates is a perverse pleasure in inflicting hurt on other people; in 'negging' them, in the language of their spiritual brethren in the pick-up artist community.

Which is why so much of what they have written over the years so clearly fits the malice standard of our libel laws. I believe that Donald Trump is a bigot and [when he said a few weeks ago](#) that he would "open up our libel laws" so he could go after journalists, I was appalled. The freedom of our press is sacred.

Except Gawker has repeatedly violated every one of the considerations that we've held to be part of the journalistic bargain. In fact, they have a lot more in common with Mr. Trump's bullying than they do with the kind of civic right that deserves protection. He's not totally wrong—there are horrible "journalists" out there and actions should have consequences.

Yet it's really saying something when one finds himself rooting for a less generous interpretation of the First Amendment so that justice can be done. It's really saying something when the state of media has gotten so awful that you find yourself rooting for a professional wrestler with children who hooked up with his friend's wife instead of the press.

But here we are. Down in the gutter with the people who helped bring our culture there.

It's time to finish them off. If the jury won't do it, then audiences certainly can.

Do not let them reinvent themselves. Do not let them [pivot from gossip into politics](#) as they have attempted to do in recent months. Do not share their links or engage in their exploitation. Do not celebrate a victory in court if they get one—that will be the *public's* victory and not one the exploiters who abuse that privilege.

Let them and all the sites like them collapse under the weight of their own toxicity. Let one of the worst eras in the history of media come to a close. And whatever the outcome is, when these types of writers ask to be let into the fold, ask for jobs or ask for a second chance, reply as Sherman did to a banished, dishonest reporter who asked when he would be allowed back into camp, “as a representative of the press which...makes so slight a difference between the truth and falsehood, my answer is: Never.”

Goodbye Gawker and good riddance.

Wrestling with the First Amendment

By [Kara Bloomgarden-Smoke](#) •



Terry Bollea, aka Hulk Hogan, testifies in court during his trial against Gawker Media at the Pinellas County Courthouse (Photo by John Pandygraft-Pool/Getty Images)

Hulk Hogan pinned a lot of opponents during his career, but the pro wrestler's latest high-profile match is with the New York-based blog Gawker. It's a long way from the height of Hulkamania.

Nick Denton launched [Gawker](#), a blog chronicling the inner workings of Manhattan media culture with a snarky tone and an irreverent sensibility, out of his Soho loft in 2002. Almost 14 years later, the survival of what has become a full-fledged media company will be determined by a St. Petersburg jury in a case as trashy as it is profound, pitting privacy against free speech, public persona against private, the East Coast elitists against Florida shock jocks—all over a grainy sex tape of a middle-aged former heavyweight champion.

Mr. Hogan, who goes by his given name of Terry Gene Bollea in court, sued Gawker for \$100 million after the website [posted an edited video in 2012](#) of the wrestler having sex with the (now former) wife of his (now former) best friend, a local radio shock jock who legally changed his name to Bubba the Love Sponge Clem. Mr. Hogan claims that the distribution of the tape, which he says was made by Mr. Clem without his knowledge, violated his privacy and caused undue emotional distress. Gawker is arguing that, as a public figure who had talked openly about his sex life, Mr. Hogan was fair game, and that its posting of the tape, which had been written about by other outlets and discussed by Mr. Hogan himself—but not shown prior to Gawker’s publication—was newsworthy and protected under the First Amendment.



Gawker founder Nick Denton (Photo by John Pendygraft/Tampa Bay Times/pool photo)

During the [first week of the trial](#), in front of a female judge and a mostly female jury, lawyers for Mr. Hogan sought to differentiate Terry Bollea, the man, from Hulk Hogan, the character.

“Terry Bollea doesn’t have a 10-inch penis,” [Mr. Hogan said during his testimony](#), after an audio clip was played from Bubba’s show, where the former BFFs joked about how the Hulkster was exceptionally well-endowed. “Hulk Hogan does.”

Mr. Hogan, who was allowed to wear his trademark bandana in court as long as it was a solid color, looked somber in all black—save for a large silver cross and silver horseshoe mustache. Although both Mr. Bollea and Mr. Hogan are always seen in a bandana, Mr. Hogan explained that as the latter, it is part of his character. As Terry Bollea, he said, he wears it because he has self-confidence issues due to having a large head and hair loss.

In a tone that bordered on the forlorn, Mr. Hogan told the courtroom that he had a hard time making friends but felt close to Mr. Clem, who he repeatedly called his best friend. He testified that he thought it was weird when the shock jock started joking about how his wife, Heather, with whom he had an open relationship, wanted to have sex with the Hulk. Then, going through a bad divorce, Mr. Hogan “gave in to temptation.” Later, it would turn out that Mr. Clem had filmed the encounter.

Mr. Clem, who allegedly settled with Mr. Hogan for \$5,000 and is reportedly planning to take the Fifth to avoid testifying, contends that the tape was stolen from his office, where he had taken it for safekeeping, by a rival radio host who leaked it to Gawker because he wanted to take over Mr. Clem’s morning radio spot on 102.5 The Bone.

“Bubba said he’s guilty of being freaky, but he would never do that to Hulk,” a Bubba fan named Brian Catton told me.

Since the trial began, Mr. Clem has been discussing it regularly on his morning show, and [he has a website](#) where he posts evidence to show that the tape was stolen from him by his rivals who want to “ruin my life and Terry’s life as well,” Mr. Clem told me in direct message on Twitter.



The Hulk (Photo by Paul Kane/Getty Images)

And Mr. Hogan's life has certainly been affected—if not, as Mr. Hogan claims in his lawsuit, by the publication of the sex tape itself, then more recently, from racist comments he made on separate tape, which were published last summer [by *The National Enquirer*](#). Mr. Hogan was fired from the WWE after that story broke.

As part of his effort to distinguish between himself and his character, Mr. Hogan demystified both reality television and wrestling, explaining that neither is exactly spontaneous or real. Ironically, demystifying celebrity is one of Gawker's goals, according to Mr. Denton.

“You know, we have a very distorted view of celebrities, of their importance as role models,” Mr. Denton said during a video deposition from 2013, in what sounded like [one of the many interviews](#) he has [given to media outlets](#) over the years, rather than responses given under oath. “I think they are held up to ridiculous standards, both of looks and morality. You know, they're people, just like us.” In a less friendly cross-examination during Mr. Denton's testimony, the Gawker owner was asked to read the explicit description of the sex tape aloud to the court.

A.J. Daulerio is [the former editor of Gawker](#) and is named in the suit as the author of the post. He likewise claimed that his intent in posting the video and his accompanying commentary was to show that celebrity sex is no more exciting than any other sex.

Shown in a video deposition taken in 2013, Mr. Daulerio was almost unrecognizable from the clean-shaven man dressed in a spiffy suit who sat next to Mr. Denton during the trial. In the video, [Mr. Daulerio was asked](#) if there was any situation where he would deem a celebrity sex tape not newsworthy.

“If they were a child,” he responded.

“Under what age?” Mr. Hogan's lawyer asked.

“Four,” Mr. Daulerio replied, defiantly.

Gawker's publicity team later sought to clarify that Mr. Daulerio was being flippant, and he did have a sarcastic tone. But the soundbite was damaging. It was a line that may work at a media party, but does not go over well in a courtroom. When Mr. Daulerio testified Monday, lawyers for Gawker further attempted to clarify the former editor's misguided attempt at humor; the line from [the deposition was brought up repeatedly](#) by Mr. Hogan's side during cross examination.



Former Gawker editor A.J. Daulerio takes the stand. (Photo by Stephen Yang/Pool)

It was perhaps ironic that the future of a blog that was, at one time, the [epitome of New York media gossip](#) is being sorted out in a courtroom in the Gulf Coast city of St. Petersburg, a decidedly slow-paced city with a population of a quarter million, where a bustling strip of trendy new restaurants filled with vacationers drinking fruity cocktails is mere blocks from down-and-out public parks and where the future of digital media [seems a distant concern](#).

But what is actually at stake here, in what could become a landmark case, is a debate about the First Amendment—whether, as Gawker contends, publications have the right to publish anything deemed newsworthy or whether, as Mr. Hogan contends, even public figures should have an expectation of privacy. If the jurors find in Mr. Hogan’s favor—and [Gawker has said](#) that that is a not-unexpected outcome—the company will appeal. No matter the ultimate verdict, a single blog post has already cost the company, which [reported net revenue of \\$45 million](#) in 2014, substantial legal fees. Earlier this year, [Mr. Denton sold part of the company](#) to outside investors for the first time, claiming the decision was, at least in part, motivated by the looming lawsuit.

The trial also comes at a time when changing definitions of celebrity, media and technology are upending notions of public and private. [The gulf between those notions](#) played out when Gawker staffers were asked, under oath, about workplace chats they had engaged in several years ago. As most people manage to forget, [anything in writing](#) can be admissible in court, and that includes every text, tweet or Facebook comment.

But despite the stakes of the public trial, there was a conspicuous lack of local interest in its proceedings during the first week—no crowds of autograph seekers or throngs of reporters, although the Twitter hashtag [#hulkvsgawk](#) continues to generate a stream of updates from those onsite or watching from their desks. (Even the lottery system established for media in the courtroom fell by the wayside.) Gawker, not surprisingly, does not merit the same attention in the Sunshine State that it does

in New York. But even Mr. Hogan, once arguably the world's most famous wrestler, was not a big draw.

“Gawker is a big ‘who cares’ around here,” said Rick Edmonds, who is an analyst of the media business at the [Poynter Institute](#) in St. Petersburg. “And there may be a little bit of Hulk Hogan fatigue as well.”

The Ten Most Heinously Unpleasant Gawker Writers, Ranked



by [Milo](#)

Gawker Media is coming under some well-deserved fire this week for [an appalling failure of judgment and basic ethical standards](#). Despite the site's professed commitment to social justice, it cruelly outed a private citizen, becoming party to a gay extortion racket in the process, for no reason other than its own vile amusement.

Much of the ire has been directed at Jordan Sargent, the author of that report. But Sargent is by no means the only reprehensible figure working at Gawker today.

Yesterday, I revealed [a non-exhaustive list of the people who have reasonable claim to be upset with Gawker](#). Today, it's time to look at the writers themselves. Because, you see, it's not just a few rotten apples spoiling it for everyone else.

Reckless, cruel sociopathy is what Gawker does. It's what the site *is*. And owner Nick Denton has done a remarkable job in the decade or so since it has been alive of assembling some of the most morally repugnant human beings on the planet to work for him.

Here are ten of the very worst.

10. PATRICIA HERNANDEZ

Hernandez is a writer for Gawker's gaming vertical, *Kotaku*. When she isn't [promoting a friend's terrible video games](#) without disclosing their relationship, she's [helpfully advising game designers not to defend themselves when they're falsely accused of rape](#). Word has it she's aiming for a job at *Rolling Stone*.

9. NATHAN GRAYSON

Remember the time when a *Kotaku* writer failed to disclose he was banging a subject of his reporting? [Shit was jokes](#). And there are [long lists of failures](#) to disclose [conflicts and other professional solecisms](#) floating around the gaming industry.

If you [dig deeper into Grayson's reporting history](#), you'll find an entire career dedicated to the promotion of his buddies' projects. #AndN

8. MAX READ

Max Read is Gawker's editor-in-chief. Maybe it's because he has to defend all of Gawker's editorial decisions to the public, but I think he may actually be a psychopath. Whenever there's something morally repugnant to defend, Read always seems to be there on Twitter with a chillingly out-of-touch and dismissive explanation.

given the chance gawker will always report on married c-suite executives of major media companies fucking around on their wives

— max read (@max_read) [July 17, 2015](#)

At this year's Super Bowl, Coca-Cola decided to launch “#MakeItHappy,” a campaign against online vitriol. They set up an automated Twitter account that would take angry messages and use the text to turn them into smiley-faces. Only a completely childish asshole would ruin something like that, right?

[Read rigged the Twitter bot to tweet out speeches from Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*](#). Coca-Cola ended their campaign shortly afterwards.

Here are some of Max's other hits:

- [Encouraging rioters to break the law](#)
- [The most passive aggressive response to a columnist in history](#)
- [Cracking jokes about Gawker's botched attempt to out James Franco \(who is straight\) as gay](#)
- His classic headline, [“How we got rolled by the dishonest fascists of GamerGate”](#)

Did I mention he might be a psychopath? Here he is [ranking historical assassinations](#) and chuckling about [Al Qaeda's "embarrassing decapitation gaffes."](#)

7. JASON SCHREIER

Killjoy extraordinaire and professional pearl-clutcher Jason Schreier has a problem with fun. Specifically, the kind of fun that involves cartoonish anime boobs.

Gawker gives Kotaku the freedom to do real journalism, no matter how many game publishers we piss off. Imagine wanting to destroy that!

— Jason Schreier (@jasonscreier) [October 21, 2014](#)

As the gaming world eagerly awaited the release of George Kamitani's *Dragon's Crown* in 2013, [Schreier accused Kamitani](#) of being a "14-year old boy" perpetuating an "ugly boy's club mentality" that "[harmed video game culture.](#)" An ally of Schreier [then accused the acclaimed games developer of homophobia](#), for equally spurious reasons.

Schreier also has interesting theories about journalism, and how [news outlets should stop striving for objectivity](#) because truth is all, like, *relative*, man.

[Here's a full run-down](#) of Schreier's laughably terrible behaviour.

6. STEPHEN TOTILO

I'm told Stephen Totilo is a nice enough guy. He has a Master's in journalism. We even have friends in common. All of which makes me wonder: Why on earth does he work for Gawker?

As the editor-in-chief of *Kotaku*, he is ultimately responsible for the work of Hernandez and Schreier. Totilo is the one who issues humiliating revisions to their pieces and apologises when things go wrong — which, as you'd expect, happens quite often at *Kotaku*.

When the lives of [innocent people like Brad Wardell](#) are dragged through the mud by Gawker's innuendo and smut machine, he is the one who takes the heat. It must be agonising.

That doesn't mean Totilo hasn't had failures of his own. Perhaps the most memorable was when a mischievous game developer sent him an email [claiming to be a "strong independent black woman"](#) who had been "taught to drive" by the video game *Grand Theft Auto IV*.

[Totilo wasn't notified of the hoax until half a year later](#), when he finally issued an update to the original story. Narrative over fact-checking and responsible reporting? You betcha.

If you believe Totilo's supporters, he's the most ethical person at Gawker. But that's like being the sanest man in the asylum. Ultimately, you're still behind bars and you should still take your meds.

As editor of *Kotaku*, Totlio has had the pleasure of approving stories about [ass-shaped watermelons](#).

5. ALEX PAREENE

[@mikielbarb](#) fuck off

— the beverage hunk (@pareene) [July 17, 2015](#)

4. NICK DENTON

You can't have a list of Gawker writers without mentioning the man who made it all happen. Yes, it's Nick Denton, whose ethical vision is the red thread that connects Gawker's multifarious misdeeds.

Despite his best efforts to coat Gawker in the unthreatening, rainbow-coloured paint of social justice, he can't escape the fact that it was [founded as a gossip rag](#), with no regard for privacy or accurate reporting and that the organisation has never, and seemingly will never, grow up — no matter how many innocent lives it destroys.

Here are some of the media mogul's famous quotes:

[“With a blog you can throw the rumour out there and ask for help. You can say: “We don't know if this is true or not.”](#)

[“That's always been my test for what makes a story. Is it something other journalists would gossip about?”](#)

[“Is there Gawker ethics? I mean, I guess there's Gawker ethics. It's a dangerous thing to talk about.”](#)

3. ERIN GLORIA RYAN

Ryan, the managing editor of Gawker's feminist vertical *Jezebel*, has a great sense of humour. Just check out this joke: when hunky actor Paul Walker was killed in a car accident, Erin tweeted [“Why couldn't it be \[Governor\] Scott Walker? :\(#wisconsintweets.”](#)

Hilarious, right? Keep in mind though, Erin has *standards*. You can joke about the death of a presidential candidate. But you [certainly can't joke about rape](#). That's off-limits.

Ryan's other internet hits include accusing innocent jury members of [being KKK members](#), and accusing [far more thoughtful women than herself](#) of attacking rape victims.

As managing editor of *Jezebel*, she naturally takes a strong stance against sexual objectification. [Except when she's using her platform to decide whether to “fuck, marry, or kill” Mitt Romney's sons](#), of course.

I can't imagine why [anyone would want to punch her in the face](#). Well, actually, I can.

Her April 2015 assailant was probably just a woman who recognised her and wanted to weigh in on her article about how everyone who posts selfies has low self-esteem. (It would be misogynistic to say I envy her, so I won't.) Whoever she was, she did the job every man in America wishes he could.

[Ryan herself says](#): “The internet has broken my brain and it just fires off dumb jokes sometimes.” At least she's honest!

2. JORDAN SARGENT

Jordan Sargent is the Gawker blogger responsible for the David Geithner gay extortion story.

A [change.org petition](#) to get him fired is already underway. But how much responsibility did he really have for it?

A lot, probably. One of Sargent's colleagues, Adam Weinstein, [vainly tried to place responsibility for the piece with Sargent's editors](#). But a brief look through Sargent's history reveals him to be among the worst of the worst.

Baseless rumour-mongering about sexual assault? He's been there: [about Louis C.K., no less](#). He also swallowed the disastrous *Rolling Stone* rape story, taking the hoax at face value and [urging universities to ban fraternities](#).

Shameless, hypocritical social-justice posturing? Yep. [Here he is accusing Iggy Azalea](#) of being racist. [Here he is accusing the Oscar judges](#) who voted against *Selma* (2014) for best picture of being racist. And [here he is complaining about "slut-shaming,"](#) which is pretty ironic considering the next item on this list.

Violating the privacy of any celebrity in sight? You bet. Here he is [asking the thieves of Usher's stolen sex tape](#) to send it to him. Taking a leaf from A.J. Daulerio (about whom more in a moment), [he's also fond of celebrity dick pics](#). Because of course he is.

[Very fond of them](#), in fact. [NSFW.] Really, just [quite obsessed with them, you might say](#). So obsessed that during the mass leak of female celebrity nudes on 4chan last year, he had just one question: ["Where are the dick pics?"](#)

Most damningly, Sargent is *really* keen on outing gay people. [Here's a barely-concealed attempt to out John Travolta](#). (OK, so not the greatest scoop in the world.) But [here's an even more barely concealed attempt](#) to out a United States Senator.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg. Do his editors bear some of the responsibility for his reporting? Sure. But Sargent is responsible for what appears under his byline, and what appears under his byline is generally depraved, deplorable and disgusting.

1. SAM BIDDLE

["There's no non-emotional reason why kicking a dog is worse than kicking a rock."](#)

["Nerds should be constantly shamed and degraded into submission."](#)

["Aim for his giant dick," Franklin County Sheriff Wilson was overheard yelling at law enforcement offers moments before Matt was gunned down."](#)

["Bring back bullying."](#)

No prizes: Sam Biddle, personification of Gawker's chilling sociopathy and rank hypocrisy, was always going to be way out in front.

Much of his time at Gawker's *Valleywag* blog involved criticising the — you guessed it — rich straight white males of Silicon Valley for their wealth and privilege. [Here's one article](#) where he attacks the founder of Snapchat for using his father's wealth to achieve his own success.

Yet Biddle is himself the son of a wealthy lecturer at the prestigious Johns Hopkins University. I'm sure it was just a coincidence that Biddle [applied and was accepted to study at... Johns Hopkins](#).

The man who lashes out at tech chief executives for their privilege was also a member of Delta Phi, an exclusive fraternity for students from affluent backgrounds.

Biddle constantly attacks social network Reddit and its users, alleging they are the uglier side of the open web, which includes the leaking of private celebrity photos. Meanwhile, he writes for a site that has a category dedicated to *pictures of male athletes' penises*.

I suspect Biddle's choice of writing topics represents little more than a [manifestation of self-hatred](#). Check out [this self-pitying article from 2010](#), in which he whines about a few month's unemployment after graduating college. It's the sort of thing that only a cocooned scion of privilege, suddenly smacked in the face by the need to manage his own life, could possibly have written.

Here's an excerpt:

Is it petty to not share in the happiness of someone else's success? Is it petty to wish – to beg, even, knuckles blistering, eyes bloodshot, beseeching each god – for their horrific downfall? Is it immature to consider another's achievement, to imagine them doing the job you wish you had-walking around in your fancy pants, sleeping with your wife in your own bedroom, eating your Frosted Mini Wheats, loudly slurping the milk-and sink into despair? Is this unfair? Should this be beneath me?"

That's Biddle all over. A spoiled, privileged, self-loathing child [who takes out his self-loathing on innocent people](#) and communities. No wonder he's Gawker's golden boy.

Oh, and don't forget this gem: ["Kicking a dog isn't unethical, but it's in our interests as socialized beings to not do it."](#)

HONORABLE MENTIONS AND ALUMNI

Gawker has been around for a while, so they've lost some stellar voices over the years who shouldn't go unrecognized.

LINDY WEST

On her personal blog, former *Jezebel* writer Lindy West divides her work into "Movie Stuff," "Silly Stuff," and "Serious Stuff." The first entry in the "serious" category is a post entitled "Hello, I am Fat." The rest of her "serious" work follows a similar theme.

Lindy West

@thelindywest

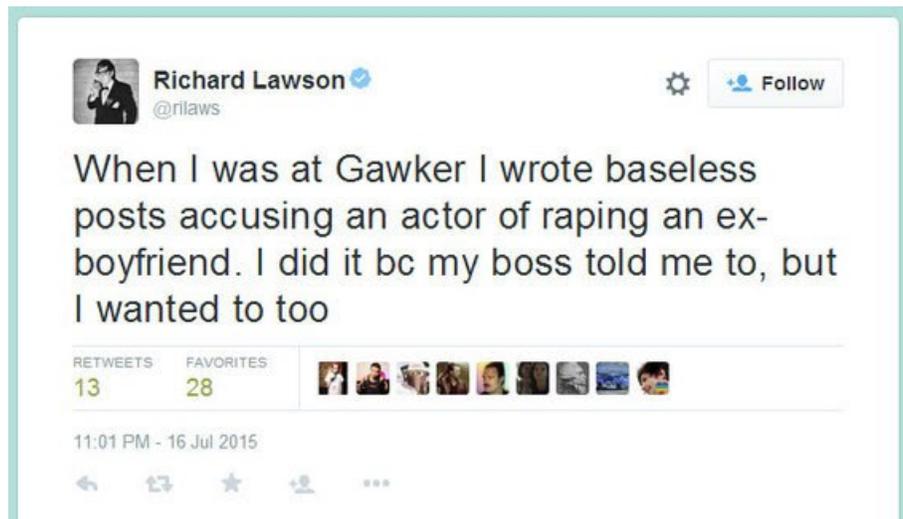
WHY FAT LADY SO MEAN TO BABY
MEN

When she isn't grossing us out about her dress size, West is [justifying her hatred of men](#) by blaming it all on them, [complaining about the "creepiness"](#) of anyone who hits on a woman that isn't Lindy West, while herself [creepily carving a likeness of Ben Affleck's penis](#) onto a Halloween pumpkin.

Oh, and she really does hate men, [especially the white ones](#). Naturally, she thinks [they don't deserve their own movement](#). But my favourite male-bashing post of West's has to be [this, where she explains how funny her jokes are](#) compared to men's. You *are* funny, sweetheart. But not for the reasons you think.

RICHARD LAWSON

Richard Lawson doesn't work for Gawker any more, but while he was there he loved to throw false rape accusations at famous celebrities.



He also anticipated the David Geithner story by trying to out Franco as gay. A lovely guy.

A.J DAULERIO

Daulerio is the former editor-in-chief of Gawker's sports vertical, *Deadspin*. That means he's responsible for the "athlete dong" category, which is dedicated, as you will have worked out by now, to posting stolen and leaked pictures of male athlete's penises. For a site that condemns "revenge porn" when it's someone else doing it, it's another case of shameful hypocrisy.

Daulerio's nadir came in 2010, when he published nude photos of football star Brett Favre, [breaching a confidentiality agreement](#) with his source in the process. After condemnation from the Poynter Institute for Media Studies, Daulerio responded [with Deadspin's Twitter account to call his critics "morons"](#) and accused the Poynter institute of "bias."

Articles about the footballer's penis continued to appear on *Deadspin* years after the original story. Favre has yet to receive an apology.

Nick Denton Seems To Be A Sociopath Dedicated To Harming As Many People As Possible

One of the more offensive duties of being an investigative journalist is *taking out the trash* -- exposing liars, fraudsters, con artists and scammers for the people they truly are. Each time we investigate a sociopath, we find that they always have a little cult group following of spellbound worshippers who consider that particular sociopath to be a "guru" or "prophet."

Sociopaths are masters at influence and deception. Very little of what they say actually checks out in terms of facts or reality, but they're extremely skillful at making the things they say *sound* believable, even if they're just making them up out of thin air. Here, I'm going to present quotes and videos of some legendary sociopaths who convinced everyday people to participate in mass suicides. And then I'm going to demonstrate how and why similar sociopaths are operating right now... today.

Why cover this subject? I've seen a lot of people get hoodwinked, scammed or even harmed by sociopaths, and it bewilders me that people are so easily sucked into their destructive influence. I want to share with [Natural News readers](#) the warning signs of sociopaths so that you can spot them, avoid them, and save yourself the trouble of being unduly influenced by them.

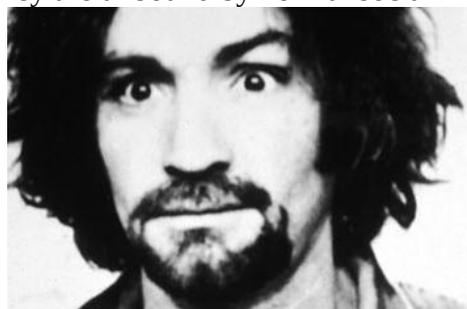
Much of this information is derived from the fascinating book, [The Sociopath Next Door](#), which says that 4% of the population are sociopaths. The book is a fascinating read.

10 signs for spotting a sociopath

#1) Sociopaths are charming. Sociopaths have high charisma and tend to attract a following just because people want to be around them. They have a "glow" about them that attracts people who typically seek guidance or direction. They often appear to be sexy or have a strong sexual attraction. Not all sexy people are [sociopaths](#), obviously, but watch out for over-the-top sexual appetites and weird fetishes.

#2) Sociopaths are more spontaneous and intense than other people. They tend to do bizarre,

sometimes erratic things that most regular [people](#) wouldn't do. They are unbound by normal social contracts. Their behavior often seems irrational or extremely risky.



#3) Sociopaths are incapable of feeling shame, guilt or remorse. Their brains simply lack the circuitry to process such emotions. This allows them to betray people, threaten people or harm people without giving it a second thought. They pursue any action that serves their own self interest even if it seriously harms others. This is why you will find many very "successful" sociopaths in high levels of government, in any nation.

#4) Sociopaths invent outrageous lies about their experiences. They wildly exaggerate things to the point of absurdity, but when they describe it to you in a storytelling format, for some reason it sounds believable at the time.

#5) Sociopaths seek to dominate others and "win" at all costs. They hate to lose any argument or fight and will viciously defend their web of lies, even to the point of logical absurdity.

#6) Sociopaths tend to be highly intelligent, but they use their brainpower to deceive others rather than empower them. Their high IQs often makes them dangerous. This is why many of the best-known serial killers who successfully evaded law enforcement were sociopaths.

#7) Sociopaths are incapable of love and are entirely self-serving. They may feign love or compassion in order to get what they want, but they don't actually FEEL love in the way that you or I do.

#8) Sociopaths speak poetically. They are master wordsmiths, able to deliver a running "stream of consciousness" monologue that is both intriguing and hypnotic. They are expert storytellers and even poets. As a great example of this in action, watch [this interview of Charles Manson on YouTube](#).

#9) Sociopaths never apologize. They are never wrong. They never feel guilt. They can never apologize. Even if shown proof that they were wrong, they will refuse to apologize and instead go on the attack.

#10) Sociopaths are delusional and literally believe that what they say becomes truth *merely because they say it!* Charles Manson, the sociopathic murderer, is famous for saying, "I've never killed anyone! I don't need to kill anyone! I THINK it! I have it HERE! (Pointing to his temple.) I don't need to live in this physical realm..."

Watch Charles Manson saying this at the 3:05 mark of [this YouTube video](#).

How to dispel illusion and get to the truth

Sociopaths are masters at weaving elaborate fictional explanations to justify their actions. When caught red-handed, they respond with anger and threats, then weave new fabrications to explain away whatever they were caught doing.

A sociopath caught red-handed with a suitcase full of cash he just stole, for example, might declare he had actually *rescued* the money from being stolen by someone else, and that he was attempting to find its rightful owner. He's the hero, see? And yet, in reality, he will simply pocket the money and keep it. If you question him about the money, he will attack you for questioning his honesty.

Sociopaths are masters at presenting themselves as heroes with high morals and philosophy, yet underneath it they are the true criminal minds in society who steal, undermine, deceive, and often incite emotional chaos among entire communities. They are masters at turning one group of people against another group while proclaiming themselves to be the one true savior. Wherever they go, they create strife, argument and hatred, yet they utterly fail to see their own role in creating it. They are delusional at so many levels that their brains defy logical reasoning.

You cannot reason with a sociopath. Attempting to do so only wastes your time and annoys the sociopath.

Tip for exposing sociopaths: Start fact-checking something they claim

One simple method for dispelling sociopathic delusion is to **start fact checking their claims**. Do any of their claims actually check out? If you start digging, you will usually find a pattern of frequent inconsistencies. Confront the suspected sociopath with an inconsistency and see what happens: **Most sociopaths will become angry or aggressive when their integrity is questioned**, whereas a sane person would simply be happy to help clear up any misinformation or misunderstanding.

Beware of fact-checking the sociopath by asking other people under his or her [influence](#). A sociopath will usually have a small group of cult-like followers who not only believe their fictional tales, but who actually *internalize those fictions* to the point where they rewrite their own memories to be consistent with them. If a guru-style sociopath talks about his "levitation sessions" over and over again, some of his believers will sooner or later start to form **false memories** in which they imagine seeing him levitate off the floor. So if you ask those people, "Did you actually ever see this person levitate?" They will enthusiastically say, "Yes!" Because in their own minds, that illusion has become something indistinguishable from a vivid memory.

Much the same thing is true with sociopathic politicians. If a particularly charismatic politician claims

he has "created millions of jobs" even though his economic policies have actually destroyed jobs and caused widespread unemployment, his cult-like followers will repeat his lie and publicly proclaim how many jobs that person has created.

That's why fact-checking a sociopath **requires evidence from outside his circle of influence**. Does anything he say actually check out in the real world, outside his sphere of direct control? If not, you've probably spotted a sociopath.

Sociopaths never answer facts; they always attack the messenger

Another very valuable red flag to recognize when trying to spot a sociopath is to see how they deal with attacks on their own integrity. If a sociopath is presented with a collection of facts, documents and evidence showing that he lied or deceived, he will refuse to address the evidence and, instead, attack the messenger!

If you really try to nail a sociopath down to answering a documented allegation, they will quickly turn on you, denounce you, and declare that you too are secretly plotting against them. Anyone who does not fall for the brainwashing of the sociopath is sooner or later kicked out of the circle and then wildly disparaged by the remaining members of the cult group.

Inventing bizarre tales

One of the easiest signs to spot is how sociopaths exaggerate things to an irrational absurdity. In the sociopath's world, every explanation is more intense and more heroic-sounding than the way it really went down. Where a normal person might say, "I vomited last night," a sociopath would say, "I vomited up a 27-foot tapeworm!"

And a truly psychotic sociopath might even add details such as, "And then the tapeworm climbed up the wall and jumped on me and tried to strangle me!"

You might laugh at such an explanation, but I know lots of similar examples that have been believed by irrational [cult](#) followers. In fact, this example was patterned off of a real live person who had attracted quite a cult following in a particularly odd, fringe corner of dietary fads. (He also teaches his cult followers to eat rotten, putrefied meat as a form of medicine.)

Every story the sociopath weaves, often on the spur of the moment, is impossible to either confirm or deny. No one can prove him wrong, since they weren't there, so he can spin whatever details into the story he wants. "After eating this, I had a three-hour ejaculation!" Or, "The Dalai Lama wanted to anoint me as a spiritual leader, but I declined, telling him that I only needed faith, not any official

recognition."

How can anyone disprove such a claim? They can't. So the sociopaths relies on these un-provable, unsubstantiated claims to build up a false aura of authority, spirituality or knowledge. This creeps up on followers like a serpent, slithering into their brains and taking hold of their belief systems before they realize what has happened.

As a survivor of the Jim Jones "Jonestown" mass suicide says in a PBS documentary video (see link below), "Everything was plausible [at the time], except in retrospect the whole thing seems bizarre."

That's how sociopaths operate. As they're speaking, they capture your imagination and sound reasonable, even authoritative. But in the clear light of day, what they are actually saying is absurd... even dangerous.

But no matter what fictions are presented by the sociopath, they always present him in the light of a hero -- sometimes even a saint -- who sacrifices his life for the good of others. He often talks of "healing" or "detoxification" or being "cleansed." When he is exposed by truth-tellers, he merely accuses the truth-tellers of being secret undercover agents. When he is accused of sexual assault by one of his own followers (a common occurrence in these circles), he denounces her as an enemy or a spy.

The ultimate destination of a sociopath is to destroy himself and take as many willing victims with him as possible. This is the Jim Jones scenario: Drink the Kool-Aid laced with poison, and thereby prove your worth to your entire cult group.

A common theme of poison, sainthood, redemption

Interestingly, many sociopaths do indeed center their actions around a bizarre food or drink theme, often demanding their members eat or drink poisonous or highly offensive substances that no rational person would otherwise consume. The *Heaven's Gate* cult, for example, was led by a classic sociopath named Marshall Applewhite. He managed to convince 38 followers to kill themselves by eating applesauce laced with phenobarbital.

[Watch the fascinating video of Applewhite here](#) and ask yourself: Would you follow this man to your own grave? (Other people did!)

Notice how Applewhite speaks with authority, clarity and some level of charisma? Notice the intensity of his eyes? This is another common trait among sociopaths (including Manson, above). Remember, this man gained such influence over his followers that they voluntarily killed themselves in order to maintain his approval!

As [Wikipedia explains](#):

On March 19–20, 1997, Marshall Applewhite taped himself speaking of mass suicide and asserted "it was the only way to evacuate this Earth." The Heaven's Gate group was against suicide but they believed they had no choice but to leave Earth as quickly as possible. After claiming that a space craft was trailing the comet Hale-Bopp, Applewhite convinced 38 followers to commit suicide so that their souls could board the supposed craft. Applewhite believed that after their deaths, a UFO would take their souls to another "level of existence above human," which Applewhite described as being both physical and spiritual. This and other UFO-related beliefs held by the group have led some observers to characterize the group as a type of UFO religion. In October 1996, the group purchased alien abduction insurance to cover up to 50 members at a cost of \$10,000.

The cult rented a 9,200-sq.-ft. mansion, located at 18241 Colina Norte (later changed to Paseo Victoria), in a gated community of upscale homes in the San Diego-area community of Rancho Santa Fe, California from Sam Koutchesfahani, paying \$7,000 per month in cash. The thirty-eight Heaven's Gate members, plus group leader Applewhite, were found dead in the home on March 26, 1997. In the heat of the California spring, many of the bodies had begun to decompose by the time they were discovered. The corpses underwent autopsies, where cyanide and arsenic were found. The bodies were later cremated.

The suicide was accomplished by ingestion of phenobarbital mixed with applesauce or pudding, washed down with vodka. Additionally, plastic bags were secured around their heads after ingesting the mix to induce asphyxiation. Authorities found the dead lying neatly in their own bunk beds, faces and torsos covered by a square, purple cloth. Each member carried a five-dollar bill and three quarters in their pockets. All 39 were dressed in identical black shirts and sweat pants, brand new black-and-white Nike Decades athletic shoes, and armband patches reading "Heaven's Gate Away Team" (one of many instances of the group's use of the Star Trek fictional universe's nomenclature). The adherents, between the ages of 26 and 72, are believed to have died in three groups over three successive days, with remaining participants cleaning up after each prior group's death.

This episode speaks directly to the mind-altering power of sociopaths. **Their delusions can be so convincing that followers will even kill themselves in order to stay in alignment with the expectations of the group.** I know of a fringe health sociopath operating right now who has killed several of his own followers, but of course he always blames them for their own deaths. It's never his fault, you see.

Sadly, even when one sociopath kills himself (and takes a few of his followers with him), there is always another sociopath waiting to take his place, seeking power, influence, and sometimes fame. It is common for sociopaths to strongly desire to be on television shows or to desperately seek out

opportunities for short-term fame, often from engaging in bizarre acts or staging strange events. This is one of the ways in which they recruit followers to join their cult.

Jim Jones and drinking the Kool-Aid

The most horrifying master of sociopathic delusion was, of course, **Jim Jones** who convinced 900+ people to kill themselves by drinking poisoned Kool-Aid.

And **people loved him for it!** They felt inspired, excited, healed and guided. Jim Jones was their savior, their prophet. They believed his every word, and they paid for their foolish belief with their lives.



[Click here to watch this powerful PBD documentary video about Jonestown.](#)

As Jim Jones proved, people can be easily swept up into an irrational belief in a guru or prophet [who quite literally plans to murder them.](#)

This is the other dominant factor we see in dangerous sociopaths: An odd obsession with dead things, rotting things, putrid things... things that would cause a normal, mentally balanced person to shrink away in horror. Jim Jones, for example, was fascinated with death and would reportedly murder small animals and then hold funerals for them.

Jones was a master at invoking spiritual concepts and presenting himself as spiritually evolved. This is another common theme among sociopaths, and you see it among Applewhite, Manson, Jones and even present-day sociopaths who are operating in America right now.

Historically, perhaps the best example of a delusional sociopath was none other than Adolf Hitler. He showed all the classic signs: A brilliant orator, a congenital liar, a complete lack of compassion for others, a dominant, aggressive personality, and the invoking of spirituality to justify his actions. The Nazi Swastika symbol, in fact, is a derivation of the Flower of Life symbol derived from sacred geometry. [See video explanation here.](#)

The modern sociopath: A threat to us all

Sociopaths aren't just a relic of history; I see their kind operating today, in 2012. A surprising number of people continue to fall for the delusional (but convincing) web of lies spun by wordsmithing sociopaths who may operate in almost any area of society: Science and physics, New Age circles, fringe health, self improvement and even "pop" spiritual development.

People from all walks of life allow themselves to be fooled by these sociopaths, buying into their false

narratives, toxic products and destructive behavioral patterns, all driven into their heads through a complex web of social engineering, linguistics and emotional influence. Most people are completely unaware they have been mesmerized into these cult groups, just like the Jonestown people were completely unaware... or the Heaven's Gate crowd.

There are people today, right now, who are zealous members of fringe [cults](#) that advocate drinking toxic metals dissolved in sulfuric acid, eating rotten meat festering with deadly bacteria, playing with poisonous snakes or even dehydrating yourself in a sweat lodge to the point where you suffer hallucinations that are then interpreted as "spiritual guidance."

These cults are operating right here in America, and they are led by sociopaths who follow in the footsteps of monsters like Jim Jones and Marshall Applewhite. Some of today's cult followers will pay for their misplaced faith with their lives. Others will eventually come to their senses and wonder how they could have been so completely blinded by a false prophet.

Seven rules for personal empowerment (without joining a cult)

The most shocking realization to take home from all this is that **people who live under the spell of a sociopath almost never realize it** until after the spell has been broken. Just as the worshippers of Jim Jones believed his organization to be based in love, life and light, people today who worship sociopathic, charismatic leaders usually have no idea they have already surrendered their will to someone who does not have their best interests at heart.

This is why, here at [Natural News](#), I have always taught people the following authentic principles of responsibility and power:

#1) Think for yourself. Be skeptical of everything. Most people, corporations, governments and institutions are lying to you. There is much good in the world, but there is far more selfishness and greed which is falsely presented as that which is good.

#2) Follow your inner truth, not some external guru. Any guru who demands your obedience is a false prophet. **A real teacher is one who empowers you and sets you free** to explore your life experience with complete freedom tempered by a code of morals and personal responsibility.

#3) Serve in the protection of life, with or without a church or spiritual group. You can protect life every day in your own garden. Resist the seduction of profit and power that comes from serving darkness (i.e. working for Big Pharma or pesticide companies). Seek to protect life, which is sacred and precious.

#4) Value all living things, including animals and plants. You are their shepherd. Protect the diversity of life and the integrity of the continuation of life. (For example, resist GMO and plant only non-hybrid seeds.)

#5) Live an authentic life. Practice what you teach. Walk your talk. Do not speak with one face and then secretly act out another. Spiritual strength comes from spiritual authenticity, and even if the world isn't aware of what you do when no one is looking, God and the universe most certainly are. Karma counts.

#6) Defend the innocent. Stand your ground against bullies. Resist tyranny. Promote freedom, liberty and justice. Help others when you can, and seek to empower others with the skills and knowledge they can use to support themselves rather than creating dependency.

#7) Tell the truth. It is powerful... perhaps the most powerful thing in the universe. The truth unfailingly outshines lies and deceptions. And even when the people around you may not see the truth, the greater universe does. By telling the truth, you empower yourself in all areas of your life, and you bring yourself closer to true spiritual understanding.