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UFO UpDates Mailing List

'Fake' and 'Self-Proclaimed'

From: "Steven J. Powell" <sjpowell@access.digex.net>
Date: Sun, 15 Dec 1996 10:41:52 -0500
Fwd Date: Mon, 16 Dec 1996 14:30:53 -0500
Subject: 'Fake' and 'Self-Proclaimed'

> From: Greg Sandow <GSANDOW@prodigy.net>
> Subject: "fake" and "self-claimed"

> On to John Powell:

> > > Show faked alien pictures to a
> > > group of self-claimed abductees to see which fake picture they
> > > like?

> I had trouble with two emotion-laden words in that question, "fake"
> and "self-claimed." Re fake, I suggested a parallel to a police
> identikit. But John says there's a difference:
> > The difference is that you'd be showing known fake pictures...<grin>
> The word "fake," I still think, is throwing a cloud of emotion over
> this simple question. What we're talking about here are pictures that
> aren't drawn from life. A police artist works with witnesses to create
> an impression of a suspect. Likewise with pictures of aliens. All the
> alien images we've seen -- the cover of Communion and the rest -- are
> artists' impressions, based on descriptions from people who believe
> they've seen the aliens.

Although it remains uncorroborated, Whitley states that an analysis of the photograph shows it most likely to be "fake." (I hope you didn't miss those messages.)

An ordinary police Identikit sketch is assumed to be based on some amount of real likeness. Do you remember police sketches of say the Unabomber, or various other known or alleged bad guys? They're not photographically accurate but they're not all that far off either.

That's the difference. Within the practical boundaries of a police investigation we can be pretty sure that some elements of the resulting sketch are close enough to start showing that picture around, and we can also be pretty sure that the initiating event actually happened. In the case of abductions we have no proof that the events actually happened and we'd be showing around a photograph that didn't survive critical scrutiny. The results, any results, would therefore be useless.

> In any case, I don't see how you can call the covers of Communion or
> Intruders or any of countless other books "fake" pictures. Nobody ever
> claimed those aliens were real.

I have no way of knowing if the hundreds and hundreds of pictures drawn by self-claimed abductees are fake or not, including the one on the cover of Communion. I only know that Whitley claims to have had his picture analyzed and the report back is that it is most likely fake.

The idea you propose is fine, just use something other than the fake

photograph or, better yet, have real police Identikit people construct some sketches.

> On to "self-claimed." That struck me as a mocking expression,
> especially in context. To which John replied:

> > So far as alien abductions are concerned we have no evidence that
> > such events have occurred therefore those who claim they have
> > occurred (to them) are accurately 'self-claimed abductees.'...Why do
> > you think referring to abductees and their stories as "self-claimed"
> > somehow invalidates them?

> "Self-claimed" or words to that effect are routinely used in
> journalism to underline what are perceived as shoddy pretensions or
> illegitimate titles. For example, the President of Mexico would never
> be called the "self-claimed President." But the "Supreme Commander" of
> a guerilla force seeking to depose the president might well be called
> the "self-proclaimed Supreme Commander."

With the difference being that we don't dispute that there actually is a President of Mexico and we don't dispute that there is actually a guerilla leader. We know these people exist, we have proof that they exist. In the context of your example I can see how terms like "self-claimed" have negative connotations. In the context of so-called alien abductions we are forced to dispute the entire event scenario because we have no evidence that it exists.

If we had even the slightest bit of evidence that so-called alien abductions exist then it would be inappropriate to use the term self-claimed because the claims would then have been elevated beyond merely the person making them.

But that isn't the case yet...

> I don't think you'll find many usages of these terms -- or maybe even
> any -- that aren't mocking or critical.

I suppose you also have a problem with the term "so-called alien abductions?" Let's remember that we have no evidence that abductions occur, no evidence that aliens exist and no evidence that aliens are doing the abductions. We're jumping the gun making the assumption that aliens are doing the abductions (if they are really happening).

> I asked if anyone would speak about a "self-claimed rape victim," and
> John replied:

> > or a rape victim I would use the term "self-claimed" during the
> > initial reporting of the alleged event only because at that time it
> > is a self-claimed (and alleged) event. (An exception of course
> > would be such an event that was independently witnesses in which
> > case it would be an "alleged" event and there would be no need to
> > refer to it as self-claimed.)

> But this, I think, is exactly what is <not> done. Take the Mike Tyson
> rape case. Imagine a newspaper story in which his accuser was referred
> to as "the self-claimed rape victim." There's hardly a reader alive
> who wouldn't catch the implication that the charges were false. So
> instead, newspapers use neutral words like "accuser," which simply
> state the facts.

In the two examples above you've based them on the legendary attention to detail and accuracy of American journalism - I suggest that as unbiased researchers we can achieve a somewhat higher level of attention to detail and accuracy....<GRIN>

> Another example. An Englishman named Declan McManus made quite a
> reputation in the pop world for records he made under the name Elvis
> Costello. In fact, to most of the world he simply <is> Elvis Costello.
> So now let's say I come along and I start writing about "the
> self-claimed Elvis Costello." There isn't a soul in the rock and roll
> world who wouldn't know I despised him. (I don't, by the way...)
> Cut now to Michael Jackson. A few years ago, he signed a deal with
> MTV. He'd do something for them (forgot what), and in return they'd
> refer to him, even in their news broadcasts, as the "king of pop."
> Incredibly, the phrase caught on, and Jackson was called that
> everywhere. That must have been his greatest publicity coup ever. If
> I'd written about him after that, I'd have been tempted to call him
> "the self-claimed king of pop," meaning it as a dig, and feeling
> justified in sniping at him that way, because the phrase was
> originally used deceptively.

Make that four examples, one of which has fraudulent undertones, revolving around the above-reproach work product of American media...<grin>

> (If I kept it up long enough, I'd be cut off Sony Music's press list, > and my editor would get a nasty letter demanding an apology. You think > ufology is nasty?)

Ufology is nasty, but not all that nasty. What ufology is is SLACK.

Partly because many people in ufology don't know how to be other than slack, they have little or no professional education and/or training. Partly because many people in ufology can't separate their personal beliefs and wishful thinking from the hard cold facts.

The hard cold facts are that we have no evidence that abductions occur, that aliens exist and are here, and no evidence that aliens abduct people. With no supportive hard evidence we have people claiming that aliens abduct people therefore it is perfectly accurate to refer to those claims as self-made and the events as self-claimed. And since we have a compound claim, 'aliens' and 'abduction,' it is also perfectly accurate to denote such a claim as 'so-called' because the two constituent elements, when used in combination, are unsupported by hard facts.

There isn't anything mocking or disrespectful about using accurate terminology and anyone who senses those or similar emotions, without having actually read the words, should be looking in the mirror for the source of their sensations...

Let's summarize Greg. First you tried using the mass of accumulated anecdotal evidence, the majority of which has been collected by only a handful of people using questionable tools and methods, to combat what you feel is mocking and critical terminology. Then you made the direct accusation that it was mocking and critical. Now you seem to prefer to have us use the standards of American journalism as the basis for our terminology selection.

I know there are some abductees out there who think that terms like "so-called" and "self-claimed" are mocking. But I also know that the other 99.9999% of the population (a few of whom are intelligent, educated critical thinkers <grin>) would prefer to be given data and information that is as unbiased and accurate as possible - so they can make up their minds, in their own time and in their own way without being led at all.

I think it is mocking and critical of intelligent people to be constantly bombarding them with emotinally loaded inaccurate 9th grade reading level propoganda such as "alien abductions" that have not been proven to be either.

Lastly, let's not forget that such discussions do nothing to advance abduction research.

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Thanks, take care.
John.

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[ sjpowell@access.digex.net ]
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