



Is Alex Gibney's Upcoming HBO "Documentary" a *Rolling Stone*/UVA Redux?

Rolling Stone has been widely criticized for not checking the facts in its recent reporting on the University of Virginia. National Public Radio reported, "...[T]he editor [of *Rolling Stone*] now admits the magazine never confirmed several details central to the story."

Now HBO is planning to air a documentary about the Church of Scientology, and like *Rolling Stone*, HBO is not confirming facts central to its film. Yogi Berra would say, "It's like déjà vu all over again."

Twelve times Alex Gibney and HBO have refused the Church's requests for questions, assertions and statements about Scientology that will be included in the film so that it can comment on the "facts."

Mr. Gibney and HBO documentary chief Sheila Nevins have rejected multiple requests to meet with executives of the Church, including those with individual firsthand information.

Mr. Gibney confirmed that the foundation for his film is a book by Lawrence Wright. As he stated with respect to an earlier project, "I trusted Larry [Wright]. I wasn't looking for holes in his story." In fact, a little homework and due diligence on this project would have revealed the following holes:

- Primary sources for the Wright book have not had any involvement with or firsthand knowledge of the Church for approximately 10 to 30 years.
- The book's sources include individuals who admitted committing and suborning perjury and obstructing justice; are known associates of a cyber-terrorism hacking group; and in recent deposition testimony admitted to lying under penalty

of perjury and have admitted lying to the media. Two of the sources made a claim in a lawsuit that was so outlandish it was not only thrown out of a federal court, but so frivolous the couple was ordered to pay \$40,000 in costs to the Church.

- The book's sources also include individuals who left the Church after admitting to such things as malfeasance that cost the Church significant amounts of money; violent outbursts; and initiating sexual relationships with those they were purportedly counseling in the role of Church minister.
- Not only is the credibility of these sources utterly lacking, each one was expelled from Scientology for malfeasance, lying, and conduct unbecoming a Church member.

Given these facts, the Church asked Mr. Gibney to share statements and allegations being made about it and its leadership so the Church could comment on their accuracy—or lack thereof—as well as provide evidence to support what it was saying. Mr. Gibney refused.

Mr. Gibney's film has been in the works in secret for two years. He and HBO never bothered to tell the Church it was even being made until recently.

Hasn't Mr. Gibney or Ms. Nevins learned anything from what occurred with *Rolling Stone*'s University of Virginia reporting?

As Edward Kosner wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*, reflecting on the *Rolling Stone* controversy, "Desperate times call for disciplined journalism."

We couldn't agree more.

The Church of Scientology is committed to free speech. However, free speech is not a free pass to broadcast or publish false information. We have all seen what happens when facts are not checked or those being reported on are not given a chance to respond. The Church is taking a resolute stand against such actions—both on its own behalf and for others who either cannot or will not do so.

FreedomMag.org/HBO