

Sound Off: On The Media

by Nick Devereux, Ph.D.

July 20, 2003 marked the 33rd anniversary of Apollo 11, the first moon landing. The event passed without ceremony or fanfare, which is a shame because there now exists a whole generation of individuals who were born after the historic race to the moon had been won, many of whom now question whether it really happened at all, seduced as they are by a new brand of un-Reality TV shows. These shows purport to be authoritative, yet intent on casting doubt, discrediting what was perhaps the greatest accomplishment in modern history. In this age of un-Reality TV, how do we distinguish between fact and fiction? Particularly those of us who were not around to witness history first hand as it was unfolding?

Scientists prove or disprove theories by experiment, but professionally trained scientists are not among the disbelievers when it comes to this particular topic. The burden of proof lies squarely with those who believe that the moon landings did not occur. Sadly, there is no simple way for anyone to definitively prove the case post facto, as not even the worlds most powerful telescopes are able to render a clear view of the lunar landing sites from our vantage point here on Earth, not even the Hubble Space telescope in orbit. Nevertheless, it is very important for the younger generation, in particular, to remember that, "the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence!" Besides, there is plenty of evidence for those who wish to seek it out, including moon rocks, the astronauts themselves, most of whom are still alive, and the many exhibits at the National Air & Space Museum in Washington D.C. depicting the race to the moon.

What is more perplexing about this whole issue is why some mainstream media seeks to discredit the moon landings in the first place? Why use the powerful medium of TV to promote such disinformation that reflects so negatively on national prestige? My answer is that some elements of the media are simply opportunists. They blatantly prey on ignorance to promote confusion and suspicion, apparently for profit. Such an endeavor is becoming all too easy in our increasingly complex world that depends more on words today than at any other time in history.

Education is the only way to distinguish fact from fiction. The world is simply too complicated for any one of us to become an expert in everything, but we can become experts in specialized areas by pursuing an education at nationally accredited universities. The media then have the responsibility to appeal to these qualified individuals when presenting stories of national and societal import.

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