

On the subject of...

The World According to Garth  
by Viki Eggers Mason



THE TRUTH IN BLACK AND WHITE

# The Aberdeen Advocate

A few years back, my banker friends sent me a sticker to put on the door of the store where I worked. The sign was meant to dissuade robbers and burglars, I suppose. It said something like, "All currency deposited nightly." When my manager found the sign on my desk some days later he asked, "Why haven't you put this up?"

I was unpleasantly surprised to discover this sliver of deceit in his otherwise likeable nature. You must understand that, in those days, each evening I locked the money inside an ancient safe which was (and I exaggerate only slightly) roughly the size and weight of Rhode Island. "It wouldn't be the truth," I told him.

It was his turn to be dumbstruck. "You feel obliged to tell the truth to thieves?" he asked.

I gave him the only excuse I could muster. "I'm just not a very good liar."

My aversion to deception makes me very good at spotting spin. Back in the days when I worked as an advocate for recreational interests, I got to be very good at un-spinning the outrageous lies perpetrated by extremist "environmental" groups like the Sierra Club, The Greater Yellowstone Coalition and the BlueWater Network, (or, as I like to call them, the Bilgewater Nutworks.) If you happen to enjoy motorized recreation, these folks are your sworn enemies. They work hard to deny you access to your public lands by making sure that snowmobiles, four-wheelers, dirt-bikes and/or personal watercraft are not allowed on lands and waters owned by the people of the United States. Since fully one-third of the land in the western United States is owned by the federal government, this makes finding a place to play a little dicey. My job, in those days, was to detect

the opposition's lies, their fibs, their omissions and their spin then expose them as dramatically as possible. As it turns out, this was boot camp training for my current work in Aberdeen, Mississippi.

At the last meeting of the board of aldermen, Cloyd Garth took time to tell those present that "people" who make up lies about him shall be punished. He then signaled that he wished to speak with me after the meeting. It didn't take long for me to realize that the "people" to whom Garth had been referring were me, myself and I. He said I had been "lying on him." Gasp!! (I hasten to assure you, reader friends, I have never reclined upon the person of Cloyd Garth – nor would I do so without profuse remuneration.)

After shaking off the disgust associated with that particular mental image, I eventually understood that he really meant to tell me I had been misrepresenting the truth as he sees it. Whew. This is not at all difficult since Mr. Garth's truths and mine are vastly different. I live in the real world. Mr. Garth seems to live in a place where whatever he says automatically becomes irrefutable fact. Mr. Garth lives in a world where he is to be respected—not because of his actions, but in spite of them. Mr. Garth, you see, seems to think he is a master spin doctor. It appears to me that he also thinks you, citizen friends, have the collective intelligence of a box of rocks. In other words, it is my opinion that Cloyd Garth is delusional.

I took the opportunity of our little post-meeting conversation to assure Mr. Garth that I am committed to devoting my time, my energy and my endless enthusiasm to ensuring

that he will not be employed by the City of Aberdeen after the upcoming municipal elections in May. To let you know just how out-of-touch with reality the man is, he actually seemed surprised when I told him this. I'm told he later remarked to a bystander, "That woman is out to get me." Well, duh!

It was a few days after the meeting that I learned the fate of one fellow who, until the night of the meeting, was an Aberdeen Police Department dispatcher. That night he was "suspended indefinitely." The man tells me he "borrowed" check(s) he found among old evidence at the PD and used it to buy stuff at Walmart in Amory. In the real world (as opposed to Mr. Garth's world), this activity is called "uttering a forgery." It is also called fraud. It is against the law and not an activity outwardly endorsed by the city. Neither is it an activity outwardly punished by the city. It is simply swept under the carpet and forgotten.

Mississippi law defines uttering a forgery as follows: ***"Every person who shall be convicted of having uttered or published as true, and with intent to defraud, any forged, altered, or counterfeit instrument...knowing such instrument or coin to be forged, altered, or counterfeited, shall suffer the punishment herein provided for forgery."***

When the value of the forged document is less than \$500.00 in value, Mississippi Law prescribes the following sentencing guidelines:

***"When the amount of value involved is less than Five***

# The world according to Garth

Continued from Page 1

***Hundred Dollars (\$500)... the person convicted may be punished by imprisonment in the county jail for a term of not more than six (6) months, or by a fine of not more than One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000.00) or both, within the discretion of the court."***

Civic students, let us review. We have at least one electric department employee who "borrowed" as much as \$67,000 from the department. As we go to print this week, this young woman still has her job. We have one police dispatcher who "borrowed" a piece of paper and exchanged it for about \$56 in merchandise. This man is in the unemployment line. How is this equitable? Both individuals used their position of trust to steal from the people. Neither has any business on our corporate payroll. Both should have a place behind bars, but one should be there for a very lengthy stay.

The deeper question is how can our leaders, whom we've placed in perhaps the ultimate position of trust, be proud of the way they handled these two incidents?

Writers of fiction call this phenomenon "the suspension of disbelief." In order to capture a reader's attention and invite them into the story, the writer must first convince the reader that in the world between the covers of the book there *really can be* lions and witches residing in the old wardrobe upstairs. Once the reader agrees to play along, you can introduce all manner of nonsense and it will simply add to the fun.

In the world according to Garth, anything can happen. If your alderman can convince you to disregard the obvious truth, you will be free to live on in blissful ignorance. Once they manage to convince you that you don't fully understand the difference between right and wrong-fact and fiction, the battle is won. Your alderman could hand you a bucket full of doggie-do and tell you it is buttermilk and you'd just be tickled pink. As long as there is none of that pesky reality to deal with, we can all pretend that we are happy, secure and living in the Promised Land.

There is a place in each of our lives for fantasy, but that place is NOT in the

world of business. I cannot think of a more important business interest than the one we call the City of Aberdeen—we must have concrete facts, figures and a firm grasp on reality if we are to make good decisions. This is no place for spin. If we are not moving forward daily on the cold, hard stepping stones known as facts, we have left the realm of reality and taken up residence in Narnia.

Take a look around you, Aberdeen. The evidence is abundant—we have been led down the garden path directly into the lion's den. While our "tour guides" have been telling us we're moving toward prosperity, they have actually been leading us into bankruptcy.

Sadly, these men will remind you that they pray fervently for the wisdom to do that which is right. Eventually they will tell us that God Almighty Himself led us here and it is by His will that we've destroyed a perfectly lovely little village. They will shrug their shoulders and ask, "What is God trying to teach you?"

The answer is, "To be better stewards."

## School in 1967 vs School in 2007—And we wonder what's wrong with kids today?

***Scenario: Jack goes quail hunting before school and later pulls into the school parking lot with shotgun in gun rack.***

- 1967 - Vice principal comes over, looks at Jack's shotgun, goes to his car and gets his own shotgun to show Jack.
- 2007 - School goes into lockdown, the FBI is called and Jack is hauled off to jail never to see his truck or gun again. Counselors are called in to assist traumatized students and teachers.

***Scenario: Johnny and Mark get into a fistfight after school.***

- 1967 - Crowd gathers. Mark wins. Johnny and Mark shake hands and end up buddies.
- 2007 - Police are called, SWAT team arrives and arrests Johnny and Mark. They are charged with assault and both are expelled even though Johnny started it.

***Scenario: Jeffrey won't sit still in class, disrupts other students.***

- 1967 - Jeffrey is sent to the principal's office and given a good paddling. Returns to class, sits still and does not disrupt class again.
- 2007 - Jeffrey is given huge doses of Ritalin, becomes a zombie and is tested for ADD. School gets extra state funding because Jeffrey has a disability.

***Scenario: Billy breaks a window in his neighbor's car and his Dad gives him a whipping with his belt.***

- 1967 - Billy is more careful next time, grows up normal, goes to college and becomes a successful businessman.
- 2007 - Billy's dad is arrested for child abuse. Billy is removed to foster care and joins a gang. State psychologist tells Billy's sister that she remembers being abused herself and their dad goes to prison.

***Scenario: Johnny falls during recess and scrapes his knee. His teacher, Mary, finds him crying and gives him a hug to comfort him.***

- 1967 - Johnny soon feels better and goes back to playing.
- 2007 - Mary is accused of being a sexual predator and loses her job. She faces three years in federal prison. Johnny undergoes five years of therapy

***Scenario: Pedro fails high-school English.***

- 1967 - Pedro goes to summer school, passes English and goes to college.
- 2007 - Pedro's cause is taken up by local human rights group. Newspaper articles appear nationally explaining that making English a requirement for graduation is racist. The ACLU files class action lawsuit against state school system and Pedro's English teacher. English is banned from core curriculum. Pedro is given his diploma anyway, but ends up mowing lawns for a living because he cannot speak English.

# We get letters! Imagine that!

To the Editor:

I have been looking over the budget changes the City of Aberdeen published last week in the Examiner. My first concern is—didn't we just pass the budget for the fiscal year? If we just settled on the budget a month or so ago, why are we changing it already and adding a king-sized \$308,459? As you will see I have many questions and hope you can help me find answers.

First of all, why did the Police department's salaries increase by \$105,727? This does not seem realistic. Since we're always hearing about our officers leaving for better paying jobs, I would think the salary budget would have gone down instead of up. Does this mean we will be finally paying our police officers a reasonable wage for their hard work and good protection?

I'm also interested in the "capital expenditures" I find in each of the department's amended budgets. What exactly ARE capital expenditures and what is the PD planning for next year that it needs about ten thousand extra dollars that weren't in the original budget?

Why doesn't the city purchase the old jail from the county and move the police department there so that we don't have to pay so much for prisoner care. I just don't understand why the PD is still in a building that is too small for them when there is a vacant jail just down the street.

How does the Parks and Rec Department manage to use up \$4,400.00 each month in electricity? I believe that is a little on the steep side! Do they just go in and turn everything on then just never shut it off? Come on, people. This is crazy!

The P & R telephone bill is over \$280.00 each month. Who is using the phones there and for what purpose? This department also has an increase in "program costs." What are these costs, and shouldn't the programs be paying for themselves? I mean, we charge these

kids to play and then we charge admission to the games. Will somebody please explain this expense to me? There also seems to be lots and lots of overtime in this department. Why?

The line item entitled "Sports Complex" was lowered. We've just added lights and other new things out at the football field – does this mean we're done spending out there?

When I saw the new figure for P & R's gas and oil expenses I almost choked. The budget grew an additional \$4,361.00 while the Police Department, the Street Department and the Mayor's office all went down. I would think the police department should have a much higher budget for cruising around protecting the people than P & R does to transport little football players around.

What "capital expenditures" are necessary at the street department? (This is the only question I have about this department.)

Why did the mayor's copier budget need to be increased by \$505.00? Judge Haynes has already been re-elected. She won't need to be printing her campaign brochures at the citizen's expense for another four years – shouldn't this line item have gone down?

And what "capital expenditures" does the mayor's office have planned? Is this the Belinda Pedrosa money we've all heard about?

Finally, why did the Board of Aldermen increase their travel budget by a full \$8,013.00? Where are they going and who told them they could go? Oh. And who told them we would buy them "clothing and uniforms?"

For all the reasons you write about in *The Advocate*, my family has recently moved out of Aberdeen into Hamilton, but we still work and do business in Aberdeen. I hope you can help me find answers to these questions.

K. Harmon—Hamilton

Hello, K. Harmon!

I have been scratching my head over the budget amendments too. Like you, I wonder why we have a new budget so soon. I mean, what happened to doing things right the first time? To be honest with you, I don't yet have the information necessary to fully understand the changes, so I'm certainly not able to answer your questions just yet.

As you know, numbers aren't my long suit so I've given this project over to a couple of shrewd guys, a banker and a bean-counter. They tell me they will need to take a look at last year's budget and compare it with last year's expenses in order to get a clearer picture and, perhaps, answer your questions.

The trick, of course, will be to get the necessary information and co-operation from the folks at City Hall. Lately they are fairly stingy with their copies demanding a dollar for every page. (Even when you want your information faxed to you which results in no cost to the city they still want to charge you full price. But maybe that's only if you happen to be me and keeping an eye on the Judge.) At any rate, we'll get you answers ASAP. VEM



## Your Municipal Employees

Cecil Belle, Mayor

**369-4165**

Ward 1 Alderman Alonzo Sykes

**369-7705**

Ward 2 Alderman Cloyd Garth

**369-5734**

Ward 5's OTHER Alderman Willie Cook

**369-9156**

Ward 4 Alderman Brunson Odom

**369-2246**

Ward 5 Alderman Jim Buffington

**369-4985**

## **Becka's Burger Shack**



**North Hwy. 45**

**369-4275**

**Monday thru Wednesday 5 am — 2 pm**

**Thursday and Friday 5 am — 9 pm**



# The Aberdeen Advocate

## THE TRUTH IN BLACK AND WHITE

112 East Washington Street  
Aberdeen, Mississippi 39730  
Phone: 662-369-0449

Email: AberdeenAdvocate@bellsouth.net  
viki@vikimason.com

Aberdeen Advocate  
Subscription Rates:  
12 Weeks— \$12.00  
26 Weeks - \$25.00  
Make checks payable to  
The Aberdeen Advocate

The Aberdeen Advocate is committed to the goal of improving the quality of life in Aberdeen and Monroe County by identifying and exposing waste and mismanagement in Government. To these ends we humbly offer our observations and opinions.

### Our Thanks to Our Supporters!

- Aberdeen Marina
- Aberdeen Muffler & Brake
- Becka's Burger Shack
- Hair Visions By Lisa
- Marina Road Package Store
- Michelle's Barber Shop
- Mr. Charlie's
- Piggly Wiggly
- Reflections

<http://vikimason.com>

Subscribe me!

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

*"We might come closer to balancing the budget if we all lived closer to the Commandments and the Golden Rule."*

*...Ronald Reagan*

