

# HEAR YOURSELF TH NK

uniting against the politics of fear

**HEARYOURSELFTHINK.ORG**

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"A suspenseful tale of escape that reads like a satisfying thriller, Layton's account is the most important personal testimony to emerge from the Jonestown tragedy."

—CHICAGO TRIBUNE

*Welcome to Jonestown*  
*Peoples Temple Agricultural Project*

Seductive  
**POISON**

A JONESTOWN SURVIVOR'S  
STORY OF LIFE AND DEATH  
IN THE PEOPLES TEMPLE

DEBORAH LAYTON

"People do not knowingly join 'cults' that will ultimately destroy and kill them.

People join self-help groups, churches, political movements, college campus dinner socials, and the like, in an effort to be a part of something larger than themselves."

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DEBORAH LAYTON

"It is mostly the innocent and naive who find themselves entrapped.

In their openhearted endeavor to find meaning in their lives, they walk blindly into the promise of ultimate answers and a higher purpose."



# How QAnon conspiracies took over one mom's life: 'It made me emotionally unavailable'

*"I was too wrapped up worrying about everything," Ashley Vanderbilt said.*

By **Joanne Rosa**

February 15, 2021, 11:14 AM • 9 min read



Former QAnon supporter explains why she believed radical conspiracies

“It is usually only gradually that a group turns into or reveals itself as a cult, becomes malignant, but by then it is often too late.”

Deborah Layton, *Seductive Poison: A Jonestown Survivor's Story of Life and Death in the Peoples Temple*

## DEMAGOGUE:



A leader (or media figure) who gains popularity in a democracy by **exploiting prejudice and ignorance**, whipping up the passions of the crowd, and **using strong emotion to shut down rational thought and demonize scapegoats**.



# THE “LIZARD BRAIN” APPEAL TO PRIMAL FEAR:

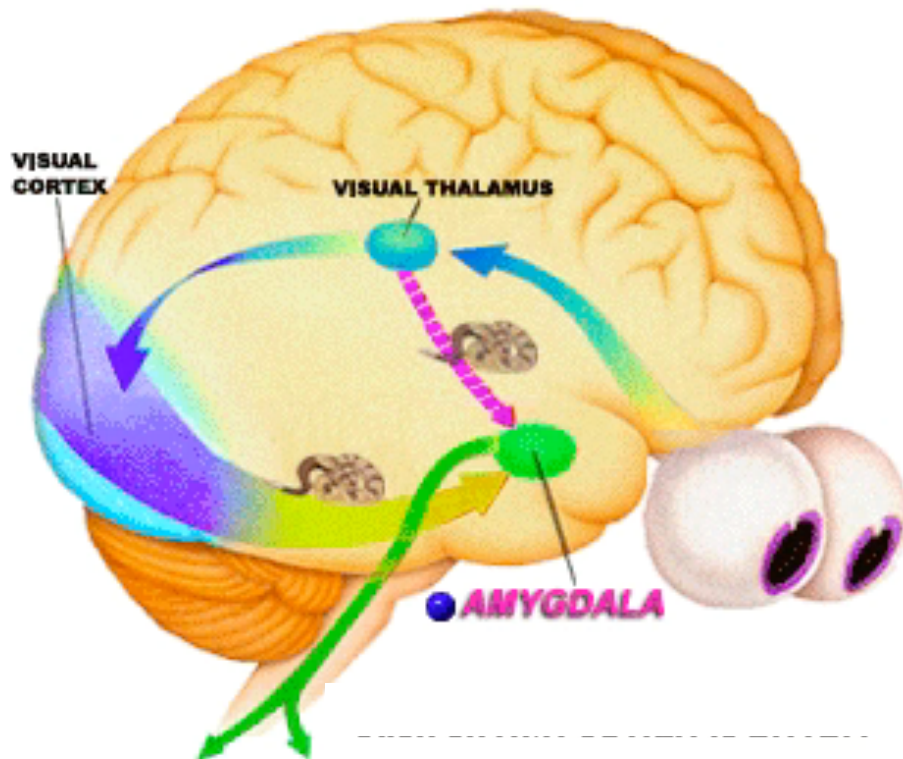


Illustration based on LeDoux JE (1994) Emotion, Memory, and the Brain. Scientific American.

**Amygdala Controls:**  
*Sub-rational emotions*

- FEAR
- ANGER
- THREAT RESPONSE
- IN-GROUP EMPATHY



## NEO-CORTEX

thinking, problem solving,  
behavioral control, imagination

## CORPUS CALLOSUM

passes information from left brain  
(rules, logic) to right brain (impulse,  
feelings)

## CEREBELLUM

coordination and balance

## BRAIN STEM

breathing, sleep, heart rate

## BASAL GANGLIA

movement, reward, coordinating brain  
messages, forming habits

## HYPOTHALAMUS

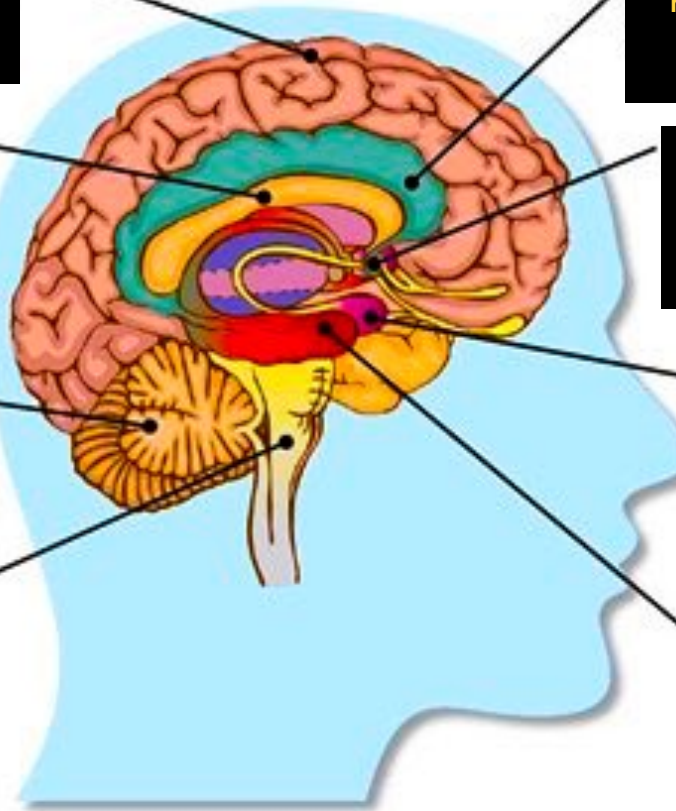
hunger, emotions, temperature,  
pain sensations

## AMYGDALA

fear, facial recognition, emotional  
memory, empathy, aggression,  
senses danger

## HIPPOCAMPUS

memory, learning, emotion



**NEO-CORTEX: THE “FOUNDER BRAIN”**

## AMYGDALA HIJACK



- strong emotional reaction

- sudden onset

- you realize, upon reflection reaction was inappropriate, out of proportion to threat



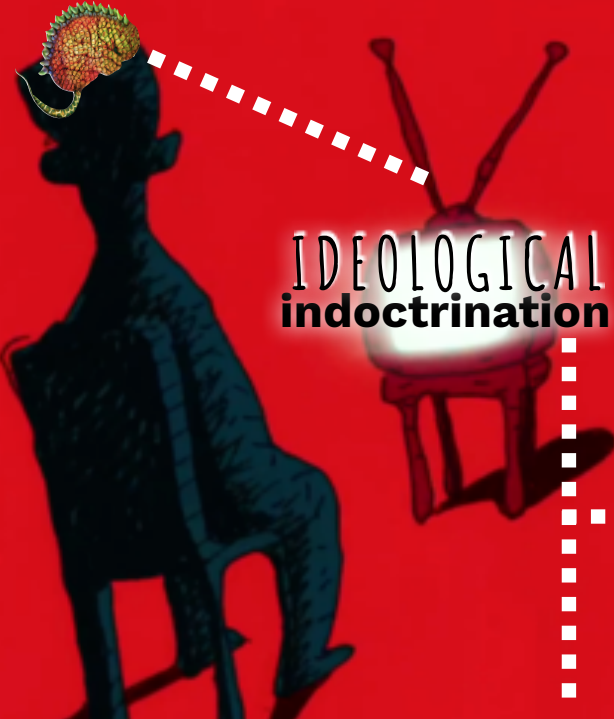
**ANGER**

*thebrainwashingofmydad.com*

**FEEL ANXIETY,  
LOSS OF CONTROL**  
THREATS EVERYWHERE

**AMYGDALA  
HIJACK**

opens door  
to



**IDEOLOGICAL  
indoctrination**

**NEW TRIBE**

(FALSE) SENSE OF  
CONTROL RETURNED

**AMYGDALA  
TARGETED** WITH  
SCARY  
STORIES

**CYCLE OF INDOCTRINATION**

## BENEFITS OF INDOCTRINATION:

- ▶ a simple story
- ▶ excitement
- ▶ source of meaning
- ▶ scapegoats
- ▶ tribal identity/ protection
- ▶ certainty/ freedom from doubt
- ▶ authority figure
- ▶ free from reality
- ▶ self-esteem (appeal to vanity)



**“...cunningly associating the lowest passions with the highest ideals so that atrocities come to be perpetrated in the name of God...”**

**— ALDOUS HUXLEY**





***HOW HAS OUR MEDIA CHANGED?***

# Alex Jones, Internet Conspiracy Theorist, Talk Radio Host, Equal Opportunity Fear-Monger



**SANDY HOOK =  
FALSE FLAG**

**PIZZAGATE =  
GO SELF-INVESTIGATE**

*Who said  
of Jones:  
"Your  
reputation  
is amazing,  
I won't let  
you down"  
???*

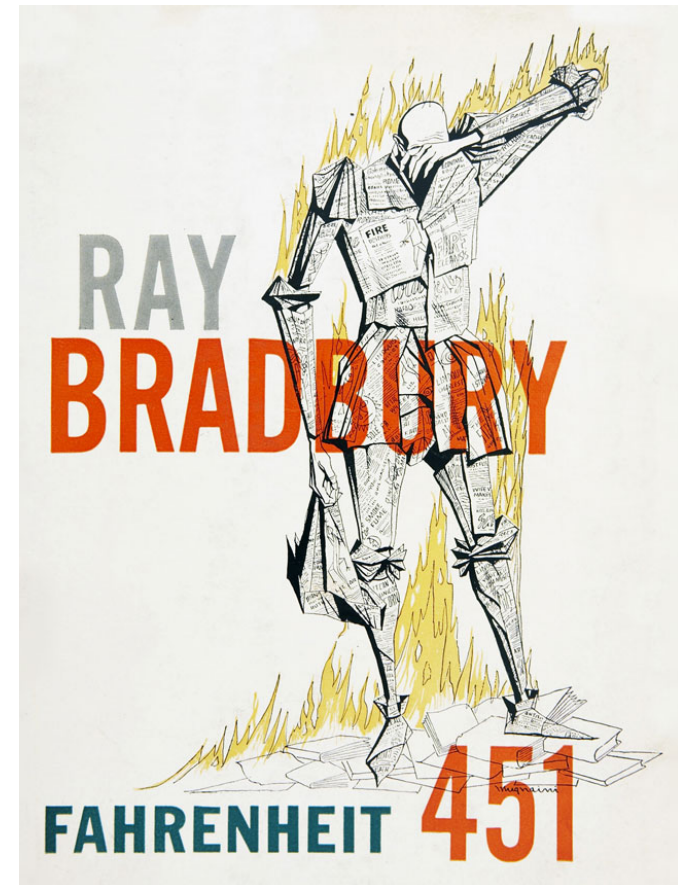
# MAKING TRUTH MATTER: THE POWER OF STORY

## Arguments vs. Stories

- ▶ One we choose to “accept” or “reject,” the other we *process* (emotional level)
- ▶ Engage heart first to spark thinking

## Stories

- ▶ Expose/reveal truth, manipulation
- ▶ Prompt self-questioning, reflection
- ▶ Impart moral lesson/reawaken values



# MAKING TRUTH MATTER: THE POWER OF STORY



## What Makes a Good Story?

- ▶ Heroes and Villains
- ▶ Suspense
- ▶ Make It Personal
- ▶ Keep It Simple
- ▶ Tap into Shared Experience or Memory
- ▶ Offer Moral Lesson, Choice, or Insight

**Story** “Once upon a time...” “Let me tell you a story...”

**Transitions:** “Do you remember...?” “This reminds me of...”



## **STORY THEMES TO MAKE TRUTH MATTER:**

### **Real Snake / Rubber Snake**

How demagogues use fear to manipulate, manufacture false fears while obscuring genuine threats (ex: fear immigrants, ignore COVID)

### **How Media Has Changed**

How we got from journalism in the public interest (Cronkite) to *anything* for profit (Jones) and the consequences for democracy

### **Look for The Helpers**

Who has *our* best interest at heart vs. only their own interests (i.e.: Who is the firefighter and who is the arsonist?)

## ***Directions for Breakout Groups:***

**Discuss/crowdsource one disinformation situation:**

- ▶ Why might that person be vulnerable to this conspiracy or demagogic appeal?
- ▶ What's the insight you want them to have?
- ▶ Therefore, what's the theme of the story you'll tell?

**Click JOIN to enter breakout room; return 8:40**